



It's so funny how many foolish immature writers/thinkers are out there. It's funny how many writers would write blatant pieces to incriminate themselves, not realizing how detrimental the consequences could be. It's funny too that many of these writers have been aware of The Beat for sometime and obviously know the rules of The Beat Within, we announce them every week, yet they continue to believe what they write is cool to publish. It's really sad to know that juvenile hall incarceration doesn't make one think otherwise. For too many it's simply a rite of passage. We really wonder what goes through the head of a young writer/detainee who spills his or her guts onto paper (for The Beat) about taking out an enemy, and going back to living the lifestyle of death, destruction [and incarceration]? Frankly, the ones who write this most likely do not read the editor's note and definitely do not listen in the workshops, when like a broken record we go over what is acceptable and what is not.

We wonder, do those people who write these in-your-face-hate-pieces really think they are going to see their work published? There is a number of Beat writers who never fail to write about not just their hood, but in detail what they would do to people they don't like. It's scary. It's tragic. We can almost guarantee this is the person who will find themselves either dead themselves or locked up for years and years, if not spending the rest of their life in prison.

What's the point in writing a hate piece? You know damn well it is not going to make it in The Beat. Is it one's way to show how big and bad and how loyally stupid one is? But to who?

Most of you readers know when it comes to juvenile hall, youngsters tend to get plenty of breaks before their chances are exhausted, and of course these are the writers we are complaining about. As for the ones looking at hard time, they very rarely write such foolish incriminating pieces.

We at The Beat Within have been doing this for awhile now, so yes indeed we are so tired of reading how big and bad one's block is. How bad you are as the most feared gangster on the block. How many people you have wiped off the map and got away with etc. etc. We are so tired of the violence that is occurring in our neighborhoods. We are tired that many of you think it is ok to hurt your neighbors, destroy your community, bring pain to your family, yourself and others. Every workshop we run we receive submissions from many of you writers who pay tribute with an RIP to a homie, cousin, best friend, whose life was taken at an early age by the gun. It breaks our hearts of how many young people, many we knew through The Beat Within, who are no longer with us today. It breaks our hearts when young people give their lives to the hood. It breaks our hearts to see young people marching off to CYA and prison, leaving their families with broken hearts, questioning where they went wrong as parents/guardians.

When will it end for you? We're not saying, when will this chaos in general end, we are asking you the reader point blank, when will this lifestyle end for you? When will you grow up? When will you rise up and out of the darkness? When will you find yourself on a new page? When will you take freedom seriously? When will you break the stereotypes that you have helped reinforced by your past poor choices?

We hope you are not shrugging your shoulders with an I don't know. Stop chilling, procrastinating, being lazy reader!

It's sad as hell that here we are in late 2006, and we still can't figure out how to put down the guns! It's 2006 and every young writer we meet knows somebody who has been a victim to street violence, if not the writer themselves. It's late 2006 and the young homies are not listening to the older G's who know the fate of the younger generation who get caught up in this game. Why are our young homies so willing to take a life bid, then wake up facing years and years and then say how they wish they could turn back the hands of time? Well shhh, we suppose it's better late than never, because many of our best writers did just that.

So here is our challenge to you, wake up today, now, before you find yourself on the grey goose heading off to the California Department of Corrections, where the stakes are much higher, and no one gives an "ef" about you. There will be no sweet Beat facilitators or other community programs coming through. No kind counselors to talk to you and feed you fast food. No fun and games from juvenile hall. Instead CYA and prison will be

dark, cold and lonely! Very lonely. We encourage you to take our challenge on, so wake up and lace us readers with hope, and in due time we hope you will put your words to action and make a difference in your life and in your community.

The topics addressed in this issue leading up to this week's writing was "The Door To A Positive Life" -We're guessing that most of you are sick and tired of being in jail — most of you want nothing more than to get out and experience freedom once again. Unfortunately, we also guess that some of you will go back to your old ways and come right back to jail.

So, imagine that the positive life you want is behind a door. (We know it's never that easy, but just imagine.) What keys do you think you'll need to unlock that door? Will you have to create the keys you'll need, or do they already exist for you to find and use? If so, how will you go about getting those keys? Just like the closed mouth that doesn't get fed, the closed door doesn't get walked through. So what will open yours?

Our second topic, "To The Next Detainee In My Room" -You may not know who the next person to occupy your juvenile hall room will be, but whether you spent a night, a week or months, you know what it's like to live there. Imagine you are writing a letter to the next occupant. He or she will read your letter on that very first day. What do you want to tell him or her about this room? Give them the benefit of your experiences. Tell them what it's been like and how you spent your time. What can you tell them to make the time pass easier? What can you tell them about preparing themselves for the next stage of their lives? You can write a letter of encouragement and be the teacher that might have helped you on your first day in that room.

Our final topic, "The Next Oprah" -If you had your own talk show, what topics would you speak about, or get your guests to speak about? Who would you like to be on your talk show? Would you be the only host, or would you have someone hosting with you? What audience would you like to reach, and what do you want them to know that they don't already know? We're looking for the next Oprah, so let us know about your talk show.

Hey Big Beat readers ,there's a Beat writing contest to consider! Here's the details for our 16th editor's note writing contest! The contest question to consider writing on is, "A Letter To The President." For this contest we want you serious writers to write a letter to President Bush! It is our goal to not only post these letters in The Beat Within publication and our website, but to send them off to the White House too! Now, do we need to suggest topics on what to talk about? Doubt it. So with this said, our contest question is all about you writing a letter to President Bush.

The deadline, deadline will be Election Day, Tuesday, November 7, 2006. As is the case with all of our writing contests, that all pieces submitted will be featured in the BWO (Beat Without) section of the "big" Beat over several issues. And once all featured, The Beat editors will read and vote on their four favorites. From these reads, our top-vote-getter will receive a one-hundred-dollar money order. Our second place winner will get a fifty-dollar money order. And our third and fourth place winners will receive twenty-five-dollar money orders. Good luck writers!

On a final note, here's this week's POW (Piece Of the Week) winners, they are Sebastian, Justin, Demetrus, Billitant, Allybo, DeTay, D-bo, Baby Doll, Big Vic, Choyce, all from the 150 Crew. From SF/YGC, Ethay Ro Butta, Meen, Wal, Mark, and Baby Uce. From Walden House, Maile and last but not least Juan from Santa Cruz. Props to you writers!

All right, in closing, this issue goes out to all you writers who are going home. Yes indeed, home! We hope you get home safely and prove to yourselves that you belong home, you belong free and that you have the support not to fall off track. We hope there's support for you, from family and friends, so you can handle your probation and negative temptation successfully. That you will get back into school to do school work, to write, read and ask lots of important questions. That you will get involved in making your life and community better! That you will get a legit part/full-time job. That you will be a good son/daughter, a good father/mother, a good friend, and that you are strong enough to stay away from the bull that's creeping around the corner. Lead on writers/readers and make a difference while at home, stay in touch and let us know how you are doing too!

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The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our communities already—we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

Spiritual Advisor: Jack Jacqua

Special Volunteer: Nancy DeMartini

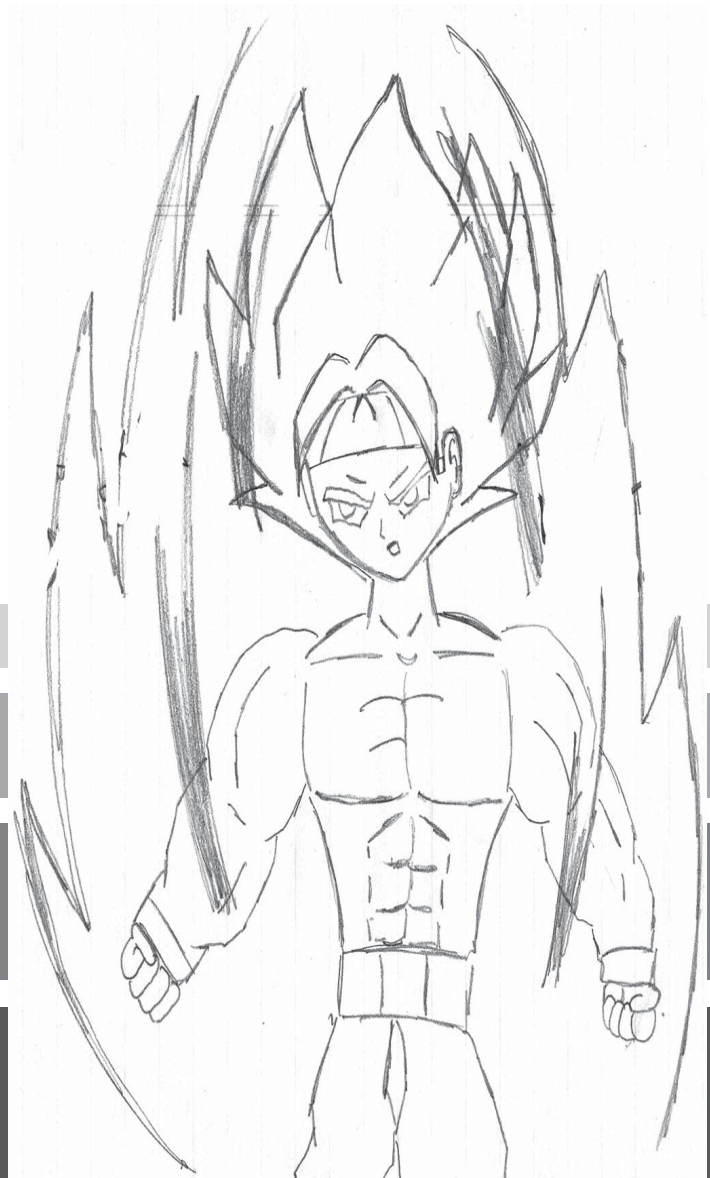
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www.thebeatwithin.org

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Mental Adjustment

I've been doing a lot of reading and writing, preparing for my long stay at CYA. Everyday that arises, I see myself disciplining mentally and emotionally. For the better part of me, it is a must that I mentally adjust.

I don't want to get to the "Y", and I'm still doing the still-premature things I grew up doing. I want to prepare myself to accept everyone's differences. The earlier that I begin, the closer I will be to finishing my trial of becoming a responsible adult. I am truly tired of doing whatever I want to do. In my mind, I fight to do right, even doing wrong feels so good — being bad gives me an adrenaline rush. I feel so powerful!

But as I analyze my decision-making, I see that it makes matters worse when I lose control. My lack of self-control coupled with the disadvantage of being ill-tempered, frightens me. I wonder what would happen if I just totally lost control again. Would I be dead from not being able to restrain myself? I try to think before I act, so that I can foresee the consequences of my actions.

I was once told that man survives by his thinking patterns. I believe that if I think more than I talk or react to — I will surely mentally adjust.

-Sebastian, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Odd that we're getting to this piece the next week, after you got so angry at The Beat program for interrupting your game of dominoes. We won't argue the justice or injustice of that (though it is true, as you said, that you were not making a lot of noise as was the case with those who chose free time the week before when it was given as an option). First, let us congratulate you on having wholly and totally regained your composure by the end of our workshop. The only issue, the issue which, as you point out in this piece, frightens you, is the combination of ill-temper and lack of self-control that seems to seize you, at least for a time, overriding any chance even to appeal to your own better judgment. In the recovery movement, you might be called "a rage-aholic", which in the context of addiction and habitual (to the point of involuntary) behaviors, would mean that you need to work the twelve steps of recovery in order to heal yourself. In this piece, you've already taken the first step of admitting the problem and your seeming powerlessness to it in the past. The most essential recognition is that you cannot afford to indulge your rage, even when you are in the right — perhaps even most especially when you are in the right, regardless of what others say or do, regardless of fairness, etc. Then, later, with a calm mind you can make decisions about how to handle yourself so as not to be so vulnerable to (mentally) disabling rage. It takes practice, but if you do indeed practice everyday, and then at night before sleep go over how you handled "trigger" situations that day and/or how you might have handled them better — you will gain the self-discipline you require. Also, it will only work if you can involve your heart, not just your mind, not just arguing consequence but the pride and self-respect of doing right, which for you means, learning self-restraint — not allowing yourself to be seduced by that adrenaline-pumped, addictive sense of power.

Think Twice

Juvenile Hall is a place where there are people of different races. It makes you think twice of what crime you committed, but sitting in a place, confined like a caged animal, being told what to do, when to take a shower, when to do anything... that doesn't make us go straight to doing right. It makes some people more of an animal than they were before. Juvenile Hall turns us juveniles to animals each day we're in here, and that's why we keep comin' back here to this zoo.

Once people had home training. They can be broken by a place the world has set up for the people that don't take the right route.

We sit here like everything is fine, while we're sittin' in these rooms, knowing that we don't want to spend another day in this place, going through depression and stress just because these family members can't stay off yo' mind.

That's why you got to have a positive mind and do yo' time. But I write this letter today for everybody on them streets -- to think twice.

-Justin, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You have us thinking. Excellent piece of commentary, regardless how one feels about what you wrote, you touch a nerve, you speak from your own experience and not one of us can doubt you are keeping it real from where you sit. The scary thing is, is that juvenile hall shouldn't be a breeding ground for further criminal activity, but it is. Look how many young people continue to fall into the traps, commit crimes and put themselves in lose, lose predicaments. What is your wake up call Justin? What are you going to do to avoid the zoo?



My Wishes

My first wish is for my great grandmother to come back, and for my grandpa to come back. That is my first wish.

My second wish is to get some medical help, because I got all of these headaches and my back hurts. I wish that will get fixed so I can get a good job. Then I will be happy.

My third wish is for God to come back on this earth, so that he can take all of the guns off the earth. But I need him to help me to be good, so that I can go home on the weekend. But everybody needs you, God. I need you to pray for me and for everybody else, so that they can all be safe because God will be here.

-Demetrus, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Those are three of the most beautiful wishes imaginable. Still, if you keep the love for our great grandmother and for your grandpa, alive in your heart, their love will still walk the earth, in and through you. As for medical help — please talk to staff at Camp Sweeney; call your headaches "migraines" and see a doctor at the county hospital. Lastly, each of us must manifest God's presence here on earth through our thoughts, words, actions and prayers. Your prayer is full of God's love.

The Next Level!

What is the next level? Surely it isn't this!

What's my next move? It gotta be better than this!

Time ta get gully in a different way!

Time ta make plans other than...the Bay.

Where will I stay five years from now?

Shhhh! Will I even have a choice if I take this same route?

It's like a rotation, how this money chasin'

Leads me to incarceration

That's why I'm sayin' what's the next level?

Can't always be a rebel

Let's take it to the next level

Who knows, maybe the group home is your best hope

To change and take a minute off rope... and alcohol

Maybe you'll stay out the hall

-Ethay Ro Butta B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: The fact that you are asking these questions is very encouraging — even when the answers may not come immediately. As you were writing this, what kind of plans were you thinking of for your future? If alcohol is one of the problems that keeps you down (and we know it keeps many people down), we hope you face it directly and deal with it, because it's one of those problems that only gets worse if un-addressed. As for the rest, that is up to you. They say that a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. By asking questions about the path you've been on up to now, you have already taken that single step. Now, just keep walking forward.

The Day My Life Changed Forever

On July twenty-eighth, it was the worst day of my life. It's the day my whole life changed forever. It started off a good day, a nice morning. But the day before, I had got into it with some people. I thought it was nothing much. Little did I know, it meant murder.

So now I'm walkin' around thinking it's over. My day was good until one of the people from the day before, is walkin' up to me. So we started talking, but he was doin' most of the talking. Then, before I could even blink my eyes, there's a 357 Bulldog pointed right at my head. I couldn't even think straight! I thought he was doing it to scare me.

Now I'm trying to talk my way out of death, but he not tryin' to hear it. I could still shoot him first, but I'm doin' everything in my power not to shoot him. We talked for like five minutes, and then that's when my life changed — and I knew I was going to kill him or he was going to kill me. So I made a bad choice, but at the same time good one. Before I knew what was happening, I'd shot the kid.

After that, I left and went home. Then I went to Fresno. At like eight-thirty that night, an investigator called me and said, "You should turn yourself. I know what happened wasn't your fault. It was self defense." When he said that, it had me thinking, "What the hell? There was only four other people there. Somebody snitching!" So then he said to me, "We found the other kid's gun, so you're going to win the trial." I turn myself in.

Now there are people talking 'bout how they going to kill me! I think, "To hell with them!" And people askin' me do I dream about the day of my death. But I tell them that I don't even care. So they think something is wrong with me.

My play-sister, say, "It wasn't worth it." But what she don't know is how it was my life on the line. Some people say I'm a murderer. I don't know what I think except that I'm just glad I'm still alive.— I was almost gone, sis'. Thanks for looking after me.

-Billitant, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Every so often we get a piece that tells a truth so shocking, it's hard to completely comprehend. You say that you don't know whether you think of yourself as a murderer or not, because you were defending yourself — with a gun in your face, you felt that it was him or you. Certainly we can understand that you're glad to be alive after someone held a gun to your head and threatened to kill you, but the thing about guns and killing — is that lives get destroyed on both sides of a gun, the shooter and the shot; one is dead and the other, living in fear of retribution, whether he gets caught or not. You turned yourself in and now you're facing trial for that moment that changed your whole life and took the life of another. It's safe to say the tragedy began before any gun was fired, and it began prior to the incident that occurred the day before. The tragedy began somewhere in your past when you decided to live a life that would have you carrying a gun for protection, and at the same moment in the life of the deceased. And the tragedy continues so long as we have children (forgive us for saying so, but you are still a child) walking around with guns in their pockets — and we're not saying it's cool that adults do, too. Why is it so easy to get a gun? We're guessing it will stay easy until gun and bullet manufacturers are held financially responsible for the destruction caused by their products. Still, nothing will bring that other boy back to life, and nothing can make your life what it was before this happened. Guns and violence are the enemy, not other human beings. Maybe you can think about that while you're alone in room. We're glad you're still alive, but the killing must stop. You feel? Pray on it.

Some of our own parents are
powerless to help us, or else
they're not trying to help.

The Door to a Positive Life

the door to a positive life is living your own life
and making your own choices
because following somebody else's life
you'll end up locked up
but don't follow in anyone's footsteps
because they might lead you in the wrong path
some will lead you to victory
others to a blood bath
but the door to a positive life
is doing whatever you put yo' mind to
don't do what everybody want you to do
have fun while you can and when it's time
don't be stupid and throw away your life
doing crimes and trying to be a mastermind
live the way you want
and follow the plan for life god has for you
because if not you'll be one sad person
so my door to a positive life is staying out of negativity
and follow my own mind-frame

-Ally-bo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's good to hear you sound like this, not because it's what we want to hear but because we think you're someone who has the ability to change his life and stay out of here. It sounds like you've had the difficulty of never having a positive role model in your life, so that following in another's footsteps to you means — living that negative life which always ends in pain, strife or an unnatural death. Given that, yes, just follow your own mind-frame and do your best. And if you pass the test, one day you can be that positive role model who leads to the path that's the best — rising above the street, its promises and deceit, to be a father to your child who's always there to show he cares 'cause he changed his life style. If you do look toward the examples of others, take the best and leave the rest. Even heroes can have clay feet. Whatever you do, we hope you never stop writing for The Beat!

Youngster Without Help

A lot of people wonder why us youngsters act the way we do. I think it is because we don't get enough help. We're put down most of the time and discouraged by what people say or think about us, when really all we want is to be helped.

But nobody has the time to see that, 'cause nowadays, the only thing people are focused on is what's happening on the news channel, and how they can survive. To them, we're like animals in the forest: here today, dead tomorrow. Some of our own parents are powerless to help us, or else they're not trying to help.

So in order to survive in this world, it is up to us to help ourselves, by any means necessary — selling drugs, stealing, robbing, or whatever. We become forced to commit these crimes as juveniles, just to survive in this world. What I'm saying is that we were not born to do these bad things. Rather it's how we adapt to our perilous situation while growing up in the ghetto.

Now if our parents were doing a good job in raising us, then we wouldn't be the way we are today. All we ever wanted was a little bit of help, which we never got.

-DeTay, 150 Crew

From The Beat: There is an old African saying, "It takes a village to raise a child." We agree that much of the trouble faced by the youngsters for whom you are speaking, may well arise from "bad parenting" — but it is not enough just to blame the parents of any given misbehaving youth. Who else can we blame? Well, we can blame the ghetto community, or the peoples or even races who live in those ghettos — or we can blame the schools, or the teachers — or we can blame the police or even the kids themselves. Or we can stop playing the blame game and each of us start accepting the responsibility to help change things in the nation, the state, the city, and the 'hood by accepting the responsibility to change ourselves into people who measure success not by how much money we have but by how much help we are to others. This goes for everybody, from the President down to the individual citizen, including the troubled youth once he reaches an age to see through the vicious cycle of doing crime, doing time and needless dying. Yes, you need help, from adults and from each other; but if you don't get it — help yourself. You've got what it takes for education and legally gained wealth.

Dear Whomever This Letter Interests

My name is Danielle aka Baby Doll. When I first came to juvenile halls, in San Diego County, I was charged with attempted murder. I had tried to kill my step-aunt for saying "ef" my dead daddy. Then on top of that, I got charged for holding four of my little cousins hostage against their will. I had just turned fifteen.

But thanks to God, my attorney got my charges dropped to misdemeanors. And on top of that, my uncle got my step-aunt to drop the charges. In the end, the length of my first stay was twenty-four days, and then I got released. While I was there though, I hated it! I hated how we couldn't do nothin'. And I hated being locked up with all those bloods and crips and prostitutes. This was when the game was thrown in my face, but I still didn't deal with it until later on in my life.

After that, I got locked up two more times out there, for violation. Then the fourth time they tried to do it, I'm like, "Hell naw!" I was on the first Greyhound back to the town. I was on the run for a hot minute before I got to Louisiana. I was counterfeitin' out there, but like they say, "Your luck run short." I got caught up. I had just turned sixteen out there, so I got sent to juvi in this place called Glendale, if I ain't mistaken. And that one was worst of all.

You know how we're in here, we gotta go to "the reflection" room. Well, not out there. We gotta go in this room, strip naked on a slab and reflect. And if you don't come out your clothes, they do it for you! Then, on top of that, I was not feeling it! But I only did two weeks before they let me go. They released me to my fake mom under my fake name — yeah, I was clever, but not much 'cause when I came back to the town, it didn't take long before I decided I needed a new hustle.

That's when I first chose to jump on the track, but when I jumped in the car with a undercover — that's when I first came here to this juvenile hall I'm in now. But it wasn't the last time! I came here three more times, plus the month and a half I did in San Mateo for workin' the internet with this snow bunny named V... She lied, 'cause it was her house, her computer, her pictures — and she didn't get took in. I did! But I held my composure.

But the last time I was here, someone from federal enforcement asked to speak with me. She told me that girl finally did get caught, and that her daddy would probably be looking for me to take her place! But I'm just ready to change — and move forward!

All I'm saying is, this life has gotten me nowhere but in group homes and locked up. I see that if we constantly make the same mistakes, we will see the same places. I'm ready to do me, not what the street wants me to be.

-Baby Doll, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You've done a lot of growing up in the past few months, more than at any other time in the past couple of years that you write about here. You never have to seek revenge against people like Victoria, but they will always sooner or later get what's coming to them — and you don't have to get in deeper with people who spell trouble. You feel? Just stay away from them. To move forward, you have to change your playgrounds, playmates and playthings. When we look at you, we see a bright and energetic young woman who could do whatever she chooses to do with her life, if she can just practice enough patience to take the time to do things right. You need some kind of part-time job to put some money in your pocket, and you need to get your schooling done, so you can have the credentials and the knowledge to get and hold a good job. Don't grow up too fast, but remember too that you won't be a kid forever — so work toward a better future.

this life has gotten me nowhere
but in group homes and locked up.

This Shhh Is Crazy

what's happening to you and me
would we rather be locked up
instead of being free
that's not me

we just gotta open our eyes up and see
why do we gotta worry so much about our family
why is five-oh always messing with you and me
is it because we're from these oakland streets
is it because we call ourselves beasts
is it because we do people shady, maybe
but some of us do act crazy
running from lady to lady havin' babies
off that purp' we choke
ninjas gettin' smoked
crackheads smokin' coke
while we're gong to jail over dope
moms is cryin'
'cause their kids are getting killed
getting hit by the steel
yesterday just made a hundred and five kills
this shhh is real
homeless begging for meals
while police running around tryin' a find out what's the deal
name's on a front page
age sixteen, died at a young age
killing over money, and fame
but that's how it goes down in these oakland streets, man

-Lil' Jt, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your rhymes jump and pump us up with hard truths, 'cause what's happening to youths in oakland, north, west and east, is like watching some kind of epidemic disease taking mothers to their knees at the graves of children who got killed in the streets. Money and fame, yeah, but the name of the game always ends in pain. Oakland's setting new records for murder, and some of the homeless won't make it one day further. So we send billions to fight for oil on foreign soil? Why don't we invest in human beings who need to be blessed with some prosperity, so that dreams of quick money in the street won't steal the rest of this younger generation's posterity, 'cause the illegal drug trade is pure barbarity. Each one teach one, like JT in the pages of The Beat.

Somebody I Love Just Passed Away

Something that's stabbing my heart, is somebody that I love just passed away. Y'all probably read about her in the newspaper. Her name is Gail Breda. I used to call her Momma Gail. She was my friend's mother. She got shot like forty times on the Thirty-first block of MLK.

Something else that's also stabbing my heart, is Oakland's homicides this year is at one hundred and seventeen! That's too many people dead, and the year's not even over yet. Before I get to be twenty-one years old, it ain't gon' be that many blacks in Oakland, if any. This shhhh need to stop! All this shhhh ain't cool!

All black young males destination is in prison or dead. Seems like the people in charge don't want us to get good jobs or go to college either. They closed down hella schools and they're building new jails, spending millions of dollars! But taking away schools, that's messed up. Think about that shhhh, man get out this life! Do something, man! Step y'all game up!

-D-Bo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We're at a point in American history where you do need an education to get a decent job, and at this point in time, inner city public schools are in crisis! So where's a youngster going to look for hope, for dreams of financial success in the street? Everybody knows drugs get sold on the corner of Thirty-first and MLK, and that's how your Momma Gail got shot. We're not saying she went there for drugs, 'cause there's also a corner store there but somebody was opening fire on the spot, and she just happened to be on her way back home after riding her bicycle to the store. So that's where hope lies? It's enough to make a grown man cry. Yeah, we all got to stop our game up and raise our minds above the grind, 'cause too many people are dying in the streets of Oakland. RIP Gail Breda.

Hair

This week (9/12/06) I'll write about one of your topics because it's about something that's happenin' right now. As of right now with my court and stuff, they thinkin' about a 18-month program, maybe even 24, and supposedly it's one of the best programs out there, "Glen Mills" or "Boys Republic." I guess they sound like all right programs, and since I could be doin' longer, it's even better.

The only shhh is that they wanna cut my hair. To me my hair represents a lot of things. It's not just the fact I like my hair. My hair represents for all the slaves that had to cut they hair, just because the white man wanted to control them a little better. They went through torture seeing their people killed, getting hit and scared of doing anything wrong, for they would get beat if they disobeyed even the slightest... kind of like when we on the light switch and don't want to stand the wrong way or else we gonna get time.

It represents for the Jews in the holocaust who was stripped of everything, their hair and clothes. By making all of them feel crappy and less than a human, way less than a human by controlling them so much. For enslaving again another race, this time the Indians who had their hands cut off if they didn't come back with a handful of gold, and killed Indian women and used their breast for a tobacco pouch. For making everyone believe in a god that is not their own and punishing them if they didn't believe in god, depriving them from their language and hair (again), and trying to control them so much.

For all the people who fought for what they believed in like Martin Luther King, Black Panthers, Che Guevara and all others who would not take no shhh, and would not stoop down to the standard level that society has to offer, which were too low in the first place. For the Black Panther that was in the hole for twenty years because he wouldn't bend over and show them his anus for when he came out, a standard procedure in getting searched for weapons in prison and stuff.

Seriously, even if someone did have a knife or pills up there, do they expect to see it drop to the floor as they bend over. No. It's just another way to dehumanize a person who is looked upon as if he is less than a human, and to make us feel shameful, to accept that we are less and not in control of our personality which we are no matter what happens to us. They can beat us, they can torture us, they can kill our loved ones and even kill us. But what they can't take is our personality, our actions and reactions to things, the way we think and what we want, who we believe in and who we love, the things we wanna say in whatever form we want to say them, and the way we act and walk.

All of this we control unless we let someone else tell us what to do and do it. It's all based on fear and the reasons we fake our personalities (some) to friends or the system is because we want them to like us or help us so we can be on people's good side. Unless we understand that doing bad is morally bad, the only reason we do good and don't fight in here is because we don't want to get more charges, which would look bad so they can send us to a longer program or more years or months added on to your sentence.

I like the way I think, I have to change my mindset in order to go to that program, which means think about your future and let them continue disrespecting us in such way.

Not getting a haircut will do nothing to this system at all, and I understand that. But letting them break me down is something I can't support. They say it's just another rule, but for how long has that rule been around and what is it based on? Why the hell will these programs not accept me if I have my hair long? Why is getting a hair cut that important to them? Why should I bend and break my beliefs and do what somebody I don't know says willingly?

If I know that what they tell me to do is contradicting my beliefs, why should I give 110% effort to an alien program, not ask questions, while that same program isn't even giving 1% effort to understand or accept me for who I am? That's just the way things work. Who the hell said so? Now that I've committed crimes, I'm supposed to be and feel "lucky" to go to a program

instead of a mini-prison in order to succeed in life. Now I have to kiss someone's toes? Forget that!

If you want my hair so bad come take it. If your idea of taking something from me is sending me to CYA for some good years and depriving me of a chance to "make it in life," y'all are wrong. I ain't gonna have no little job and work for somebody. "You can pay own your own business." Well then, why am paying taxes to a crooked government I don't support? Working for this country is something I won't do for a living, I'd rather be a bum. I'd rather live my life in a jungle. I do want to become a jungle man, but I know what I'm supposed to do with my life, and that is to ignite the biggest revolution there ever was.

Now its 9/19/06 and my birthday was two days ago. I don't feel like I'm sixteen. It feels like I'm a young person and the number of years I have lived is just a number because experiences and what you have learned and how mature, responsible and all that other shhh makes you older. Smoking crack also makes you older because you die faster.

Well shhh, my next court is 9/29/06, and within two more weeks after that I'm off to YA for a month. Then I come back and get ready to go to either Boys Republic or George Junior. George Junior sound hella tight 'cause you live in a house with six other people and go to school outside of the house. It's in Pennsylvania, hella different-ass people and you get to keep your hair long. Man if this all happen, I am going to be happy as hell. Everything I happening the way I wanted it to. And they 'bout to help me go to college.

I get to get off probation when I turn 25 or if I finish college first, and no strikes. I don't know if I should feel happy about that or not. Forget the system anyways because what about the thousandths of the other people that should be out right now but are not? To hell with them forever because they shouldn't've killed Tookie.

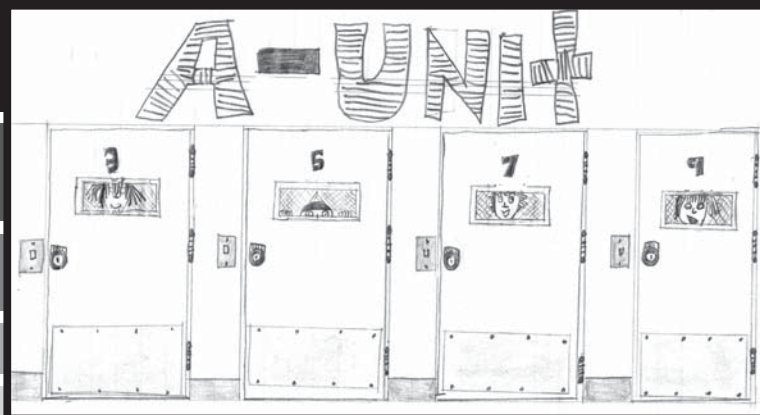
But yeah, when I get released, I'ma still be writin' in The Beat Without, so look in the back and read my shhh if y'all want. Don't follow what the system tells you to do or even what your friends tell you to do. Do what you want to do, I mean as in freedom, because you are you and nobody else is you, so think independently. Don't follow this generation because this one is filled with crackheads and no kind of respect toward anybody, I mean unless you want to continue the death of our own people. Learn to speak your culture and be proud of where you're from. Learn to speak your language fluently because the government doesn't want you to.

Be proud of yourself because we are unique and each one of us got a life to live besides this criminal type shhh we doin'. We ain't supposed to know yet, so we should find our calling in life. Don't let the law restrict you though, because if you want to walk around naked then walk around naked. That's what I mean when I say forget the law. Sellin' drugs and gang bangin' is just killin' our own people, so we must fight back in a different way, young soldiers. We must prepare to fight this war that is inevitable in our near future. We must fight in such way that will embrace America and by that I mean fight according to the law the rules society tells you and other shhh like that.

Well now I have to go, so bye and until next week or whenever I write next time,

-Meen B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We need to make two points right off the bat. First, we don't disagree with anything you've written here. We admire both your fierce sense of independence and freedom, and your reasons for growing your hair long, and we don't understand why it should be such a big deal. In fact, we had major battles with many institutions (including colleges and high schools) 30-40 years ago over the exact same issue. It seems that hair is seen by authority as a way of controlling the young. But the second point we have to make is that you are not in an equal relationship with the system. You are under the control of the criminal justice system, and there will be a lot of things that you find offensive and even stupid, but that you will still be required to do. Let's put it this way: If it is so important for you to fight this hair rule, then be prepared to accept the consequences, as unfair as those consequences might be. Sometimes, you just have to weigh the benefits of sacrificing principles against the things you'll be facing if you hold to principle and resist — like facing federal prison if you don't pay those taxes to a government you hate. Most of us have had to make those kind of choices, and they are never easy, and they are always personal. (One last note: You're right that the system should never have killed Tookie, but Tookie is just one of the people executed by the state, and we hope your views about his execution will extend to all...)



A Friend

slowly his temperature is beginning to rise
 people say they're cool but always tellin' him lies
 a forgotten memory he is, once he dies
 he was alone so no one heard his cries
 he was begging for a little attention
 needed a little break because he had too much tension
 moms and pops was never there
 only fake people who said they care
 but he was a soldier, so he tried to make it
 but the smile he put on, he always faked it
 his internal bleeding was depriving him of life
 how should he end it, a gun or a knife
 neither would be his best option
 he is cold and alone
 a youngsta, but he's grown
 he would call a hotline but he can't reach a phone
 his body was heavy, holdin' him down like a stone
 the pain began to get worse
 the blood in his veins began to burst
 seeing visions of himself in a hearse
 living this life of his, has to be a curse
 but he decided to stop midway
 thinking tomorrow would be a better day
 molding it to something better like some clay
 his life wouldn't end this way
 then he realized the blood continued to pour
 the pain hurt him to the core
 he couldn't take it no more
 so he decided to crawl to the closet door
 opened it up and went inside
 he decided to hide
 but death crept up the left side
 he wasn't ready for the ride
 got the glock and put to his temple
 thinkin' 'bout it, he thought he was mental
 the sweat and tears began to drip
 the trembling was uncontrollable on his lip
 his courage began to get bigger
 screw it, he pulled the trigger

-Big Vic, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What a dark and powerful poem! When a friend takes his own life, we all feel more alone; and it hurts us to the bone. Was there something we could have done or said to ease the pain, to stop the infection's spread. For the internal bleeding of which you write, is still just a feeling, however deep and real the pain, and that sort of bleeding can spontaneously heal again — but that bullet tearing through flesh, is a permanent solution to a temporary mess. That hotline is a good idea, or in the hall, there are psychologists who get paid to hear. Talk alone won't erase a lifetime of pain, but at least it can stimulate a debate in heart and brain; it can reveal the other side of despair. If our parents didn't love us, we can still love when our children are here — and our pain is transformed as we nurture those for whom we love and care. Fake ceases to be a world vision, when we make the decision that the source of love we seek must start within us, show in both our actions and the words we speak. Or else, we talk ourselves into hopelessness, seeking a permanent solution to a temporary mess. We're sorry for your friend. Your poem is powerful, but for you and your reader both — his death is not the end. Let us mourn the fallen in our hearts, and even in the pain of love, find the source within us that understands, that we may start to live for love of our fellow woman and man.

Next Oprah

Wow! If I had my own talk show it would be real. Like all these movies nowadays. They are all things that don't happen in real life. Some really do happen, but not most of them.

My show would be about my life on the streets, to rehab, and surviving and a lot more people like that. To be honest, I wouldn't even run the show by myself because I want all the people who have made mistakes be heard as they progressed and changed positively.

I want it to grab a lot of different types of people to watch it. A lot of people go through some bad and horrible things, and nobody really understands. Everyone who wants their story heard will be a guest. So yeah, that's my talk show.

-Maile, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: We would definitely watch this talk show, and we would try to get as many people as we know to watch it, too. We love the fact that you want to give people a chance to tell their stories who don't usually have that opportunity — and that you want to present the progress they make towards a better future. This show would be a hit!

I Hate

i hate caring so much when no one else seems to care
 i hate seeing dollar signs everywhere
 i hate that i have no patience to spare
 i hate that nothing's fair
 i have all these sounds in my head
 i don't wanna die
 i hate feeling dead
 i hate feeling this hate so deep
 i just wanna smile but i hate being fake
 feeling i'm 'bout to break
 while i'm lookin' at the life i left
 it's kinda hard not to hate myself
 but quiet is kept
 right or wrong it's just the way i felt
 i might be better off prayin' for death
 on my knees i knelt still tryin' ta find a way to accept
 that ain't a way i can help nobody till i save myself
 man i played myself
 i ask how can a man who's done so much
 be touched
 so unjust
 'cause i tried to inspire the folks
 you wanna condemn 'cause they sell dope
 well man show 'em the ropes
 be a fatha or a football coach
 a role model, lord assemble the hope
 take another approach
 instead of testifyin' against 'em in court
 handcuffin' 'em and closin' the door
 so they can be worse than before
 can't you see they only do what they know
 and you wonder why they don't care no mo'
 life ain't fair i know
 but why i'm hated everywhere i go

-Choyce, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Shades of your older brother Edward, seem to flit across the page, both into our hearts and headward. The eloquence of these rhymes that testify both to being a part of the problem and trying to see a way through a life that leads to death or doing time. We completely agree that punishment is not going to change the way people try to maintain in a street flooded with drugs, violence, poverty and pain. But with words like this in your brain, you can't give up on life — even if you don't get to show a better way on the outside, at least for a while, you can still point the way with the words that your write and the things that you say. Be a role model even if it's behind bars, so even the damned can learn to see past their scars.

Who's Next In My Room?

To whoever is next in my room
 Stay strong while doin' yo' time
 When out don't commit mo' crimes
 If back in my room, read the books
 By books I mean to educate the mind
 'Cause there's so much time while doin' yo time
 But just don't forget the people you left behind
 while in the room, 'cause every night
 they shed tears for you
 To tell you the truth,
 the One to help you while doin' yo' time is the Lord
 Himself
 Just don't give up hope while in the room
 'Cause there's still two more ears that's listening to you
 "Are you going to be next?"

-Baby Uce B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You've packed in a lot of excellent advice in t his short poem, Baby Uce. If you had read a note like this when you came in here, would it have helped you? What kind of books do you read? Have any of them given you insights or information about how to live your life? What are your plans for when you walk out these doors? How are you preparing yourself never to walk back in?

Hiding, Waiting

I hide behind the shadows that protect me,
 waiting for the violent storm of footsteps to pass.
 Every scar on my body is a danger I had to live.
 Even the memory that hunts me in my sleep scars me.
 In every little kid I see my reflection.
 I hide my secrets like I hide my scars –
 so I won't be laughed at, or scare anybody.
 I can count every bone in my body
 and it feels like the weather is sucking the life out of me.
 I wish I was in heaven smelling the sweet air, or
 I wish I was a king, in a fairytale or a lovely story.

-Juan, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: A beautiful and haunting and wonderfully written poem. This is a keeper Juan. We bet there's more good stuff lurking in your fertile brain, just waiting to get out. And we'd like to see it. We'd like you to teach our readers by sharing your world with us all!

In every little kid I see my reflection.

I hide my secrets like I hide my scars

The Birth Of A New Man

These four walls can't hold me in
 It's not where we are, but what's within
 Life's pains pass by, and its hurts subside
 I'm a man now, and this is not where I will abide

I've grown up
 Never gave in
 I've messed up

But now my life's about to begin
 A new leaf filled with laughter
 My new story in its first chapter
 A mind with a drive never to stop
 A man with the heart to work to the top

-Wal B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: What a wonderful poem, Wes. We love the determination to become the good man that you are striving towards. What made you want to change? What made you decide that this is the time? What are your goals in life, and what is your plan for achieving them?

To The Next

I hope you get better use out my cage
 And read more books from page to page
 Don't worry about what's scratched in the plaster
 Take it day-by-day and your time will go faster
 My days in this box were mentally excruciating
 Drowning me slowly, the solitude was suffocating
 When the lights so out just remember you family
 And they will be with you even in tragedy
 In that room right where you sleep
 I had shed millions of tears when I was week
 Times got hard, it turned into my sanctuary
 I hid under my covers when time got scary
 Don't get me wrong, I'm not easy to fright
 But it gets really depressing alone night after night
 And the dreams will set you free of your surroundings
 Brought back to reality from your neighbors annoying
 poundings

Yes, you will scream, yes, you will cry
 No, you're not free and all hope will soon die
 It is up to you to create a better place
 In you head so your dreams won't go to waste
 'Cause if you can't control your demons
 You'll never be free and on this cot you'll remain
 sleeping

Through the blurry visions of the foggy glass
 You'll remember memories hidden in your past
 All I can do is offer some advice
 All you can do is hope for another roll of the dice
 I pray that your next roll will have better consequences
 And won't put you behind barbed-wire fences
 This place ain't that bad if that's what you make it
 But take advantage of your situation... you better not
 fake it.

And one day when you're free just like I am
 Maybe you'll still be a boy or a strong responsible man
 Count your showers, count your meals
 Visits and letters are what's really real
 Let go of the streets, they'll only hold you down
 Be quiet when talk is dead, don't make a sound
 Because then they'll lock you back up in your cage
 And all you'll be left with is these words on this page

I wish you never had to enter my cave
 Change your direction of the road you pave
 Or it will get worse... you might end up in a real jail
 Facing 25 to life with no chance of any bail
 And you'll be lost in a world of self-pity and regret
 Any chance of freedom you just better forget
 But it doesn't have to come to that
 Go to school, do your math

Leave the streets behind 'cause they'll lose you
 It all depends on what you choose
 Right and wrong, warm or cold
 In jail rotting, or free dying old
 Which one's better, which one do you prefer
 To live a life of enjoyment or watch your family suffer
 All I know is I did what was right
 And I'm not the one lonely, crying myself to sleep every
 night

-Mark B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This is yet another tour de force of writing. We just don't know how you put an amazing poem like this together in less than an hour! What kind of role do you see yourself playing as you mature into manhood, Mark? We see a great teacher in you already, even though it takes time and effort to become the kind of teacher they pay a salary to. Have you ever thought about putting that time and effort into that possibility? If you did, we know who the real winners would be — those students fortunate enough to have you for their teacher.

My Future

What I plan on doing for the future is to do good in the placement that I'm being sent to. And while I'm there I'm gonna keep myself in a positive path, so I won't have to come back to this place. After I leave the grouper, I'll have about a good year of high school left. So it's all good! I'll be stacking hella money with a job that this program I'm with is gonna help me get. Occasionally come to Omega meetings. And get my record erased from the system.

-Lil' Spitta B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Sounds like a terrific plan, Lil' Spitta. What kind of job has your program set up for you? Can you go to high school and work part time after school and/or on weekends? Will this job train you in things that interest you? It will require you to summon all your self-discipline to avoid the temptations that others will put in your face when you're out of here. Are you up to the task of saying no?

Heads Up To New Detainees

If I was to write a letter to one of the detainees, first I would tell 'em the rules 'cause the counselors quick to give you time fa some weak-ass shhh. They can't seem to get it through their head that we locked up regardless if we in our box or in the rec room.

But anyway I, would put 'em on how this shhh is set up for us. I say "us" 'cause I know it's a 98 percent chance that my neighbor in here will be a minority. I would basically tell 'em how this is a business, and we are the product and the profit of this business. Hopefully he would take this information and think about it like I do now.

In a minute Beat, I'm out.

-Tha Kid, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Have you ever heard the saying, "The more you know, the more you owe?" This is something that your piece reflects clearly. That advice that you have to offer is very valuable to a someone who is walking into a trap blinded to the realities that lie beneath the smokescreens and smiles. This says a lot about your character as well your powers of observation. We'll bet that if the walls could talk, they would reflect the same message that you just shared with us all. (By the way, wouldn't your advice be equally important for non-minorities, too?)

Rest In Peace

What's up Beat? This Lil' Bee from Oakland. Man, my ninja Lil' Dave is now a statistic, and I didn't even get to see him since last time he was in the hospital. He had a broken hand, and I had a fractured finger. We was at the hospital getting on hella pearl.

But when we used to be on the spot shooting dice, I was never able to hit. Him, he was always hittin'. I'm mad and shhh, but I'm tryin' to get through it. Ninjas talkin' 'bout they knew Lil' Dave, but they didn't 'cause I was always with Lil' Dave and never seen none of these ninjas but a couple.

Me and Lil' Dave used to look alike: our dreads and gold tips, light skin, top and bottom grill. When we was out in black hoodies, jeans and Jordans, we was like twins! I swear I miss him! I even remember when we got into it. We was fonkin' for about a week. Then we was coo' again.

I gave him a ride to Hayward to go pick up some clothes from the house. We had hella good times! Ninja, if you don't know Dave, don't say you do.

-Lil' Bee, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Man, this is the first piece you've ever given us that didn't shout your crew's name in the first line. Maybe some part of you knows that it gets people killed, and it kills people you love, like Lil' Dave. You can say it was his enemies, but running with a crew guarantees enemy turf crews in the streets. You know how they used to say: Don't blame the player, blame the game. Yeah, well, the game killed your street twin Lil' Dave, and the game will keep sending young men to early graves until enough young men see the truth of it, change their ways to repping peace and be the living proof of it. Man, we know nothing can reach that hurt you feel knowing Lil' Dave is dead, but make his death mean something more than adding another statistic to the street change your life, get the grind off your mind and start thinking realistically about your future. 'Cause we really don't think an early grave suits you.

Meth Kills

When your heart turns cold, it causes your soul to freeze. It spreads throughout your spirit like a ruthless feeling disease.

The walls that once were down now stand high and tall. As you turn that glass pipe, everything seems great — all you need is another 8 ball. Crystal hasn't left you, but without it your world begins to fall.

You start to steal from the ones you love and you begin to lose their trust.

As you take that one last hit... you hold it in too long Your lungs are the last to freeze, and everything — including your life — is gone.

-Lil' Skizz, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: We hope your words reach those who still think they can play around with that crystal pipe without paying the piper. You nailed it with that last line. Stay sober, and keep writing!

... this is a business, and we are
the product and the profit
of this business.

Missing My Family

Today is September 19th of 2006. I've been in the system since 2004 — two years of my life I've already wasted. But shhh really 'bouts to change for me. I might be going back to Walden House for three months. But I'm happy though 'cause my baby due date is January 12th, so ill be out to witness my child's birth.

I with I was out there with my family though, 'cause ever since I've been locked up, my family been doin' bad. What I mean by bad is that one or two of my family members is strung out on crack. That shhh ain't coo'. If I was to be out there, I'll beat some sense in them.

Pops been an alcoholic for the longest trying to beat up on moms when I was a youngsta, and I would go to the kitchen and grab a little sharp-ass knife ready to stab pops to death if he laid one hand on my moms.

I look at my past and think about a lot of stuff that has happened to me. I told myself today that I'm goin' ta change, and I really mean the shhh though. I'm dead serious. I don't want to end up like some people I know. I personally know I'm better than this.

So Beat Within staff and readers, this is the last time y'all will ever see Lil' Nicoya in the little corner of The Beat. Take care people.

-Lil' Nicoya, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Congratulations on getting out of here, Lil' Nicoya, and on almost becoming a father. We know you have it in you to be a good one, to not repeat your father's mistakes. But we also know it isn't easy. In fact, we think being a father is the hardest job in the world for anyone who takes it seriously (except for the job of being a mother). Not being able to help your family is one of the hardest things to have to deal with when you're locked up, but do you really believe you can beat people into changing? Did you get beatings as a child? Did it stop you from doing the things you got beat for? We would urge you, when you get out, to attend parenting classes with your baby mama (available through Planned Parenthood) so that you can learn about child development and the best way to bring children up, including the best ways to discipline them. We don't think it's enough to say that you're going to do it the way you know best, because we can all always learn new approaches. We wish you the best of luck, and we urge you to continue to write for us, whether you're at Walden House or at home. You won't be in this "little corner of The Beat," but you will be in the back of the magazine. We'd love to hear how and what you're doing.

Why Can't I Do What I Say I'm Gonna Do?

Man, I hate being in YGC. This really ain't the place to be. But every time they let me out I can't stay out. Because all I like to do is post on the block all day. But to me this block shhh getting played out. People is dying every day out there. I sometimes wonder what could've happened to me if I was out. But being in here I don't have to worry about getting shot or nothing.

I really want to do right in life but I need some guidance to lead me on the path. It's like every time I get locked up I always say I'm gone do this an' do that, but when I get out, I go back to doing the same shhh.

But now I'm in a serious situation and I been stressing hell a much about it. But all I could do is pray to God and ask him for help because God is the only person that can change things in life. But I can't blame nobody but myself because I'm the only person that can control my actions. But most of us young teens don't think before we do stuff. We always say if I would've did this or if I would've did that, but we always say too late. We wait until we get locked up to say that type of stuff.

But to all up in here, keep your head up.

-Lloyd B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Yes, it's a big problem making promises when you're locked up that are too easy to forget about once you are set free, leading right back to lock-up! So tell us, what is the particular thing or things you do to give away your freedom? Is it drugs? Gangs? Theft? Robbery? Fighting? The reason we're asking you to identify particular negative behaviors is that if you can identify the particular problems you're having staying free, then maybe you can address those problems in a particular way. In other words, it's fine to rely on God for general guidance, but you need give God a little guidance, too. What kind of specific help would benefit you the most on the outs to make this your last trip to the hall?

We always say if I would've did this or if I would've did that, but we always say too late.

This Ol' Life

can you live my life
doing what i do every night
watching my back from haters
and red-and-blue lights
paranoid because i always gots to fight
scared to go places by myself at night
because there's at least one or two haters
tucking the gun tight
so can you live my life
wondering who coming for you
and when they come not knowing what to do
even gots to watch out for your own crew
grinding in the streets
trying to ride twenty-two's
watching out for gangs that claim red or blue
so i wish you'd try to live my life
tryin' hard to earn my stripes
but it will never happen
because the way i live cannot be imagined

-Ally-bo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: In the recovery movement, they call your attitude "terminal uniqueness" — because you believe no one can understand the life you live, you don't have to accept the wise or caring advice another might give. Perhaps here "terminal" means: ending in jails, hospitals and death. And by the by, The Beat's the place for those who've lived your life and know, the stripes you're trying to gain are really not much different than on the backs of the slaves over centuries ago. But now they have you conniving to trade in your freedom for the life you're describing. But the question really is — can you live the life you've lived and find the courage to shift your goal from earning stripes to growing whole. It will take greater courage to face not only your enemies but their way of life, 'cause they, too, are just out there earning stripes in the darkness of darkest night. Are you up for that fight? Imagine living your life right.

What I Got Right Now

Yo, I'm still sittin' in dese halls,
still goin' through it all,
still waitin' for my name to finally be called
to leave YGC and finally be set free
back to da streets and back to my peeps
'cause it's been five weeks since I caught my case
and I have no faith dat I'll soon leave dis place
'cause da DA is really tryna play me for real
He goin' straight for da kill like forget givin' me a deal
He on ya boy for real, but what he don't know, foo'
da only thing I'm tryna do is be successful in da school
and move ahead to bigga and betta things
'cause what I got right now ain't worth a damn thing
So I'ma do da college thing then stack bread like Wonder
and let my pockets do da talking, speak loud like thunder

-Mista Majik B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We can't do anything about you still being here, Majik, but we can give you major props for your plans for after you leave here. You say that what you've got right now "ain't worth a damn thing," but you're forgetting something that you have that is worth more than gold: your brain! Not everyone is blessed with the ability to think, to observe, to make judgments and change course. You have those gifts, so use them wisely! Let your deeds speak louder than your words!

In Da Halls

Whoever is coming into the YGC, look homie, whatever you did it's not cool. But while you're here, just keep your stuff straight. Some stuff I think you should do to pass the time in this room is just get a book and just read.

Also some stuff that help me is just straight up told my family not to visit me until I have been here a while because. If I see the people I love, it makes me feel bad that I'm not with them out there. Also just try to do some exercises and try not to think about the people you love because you'll just feel bad about not being on the outs with your loved ones.

-Alfredo B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Why would you recommend a person to overlook issues that cause pain? In most cases now is the perfect time to face matters at hand that cause pain because now you have the time to deal with those issues (and even the possibility of some caring adults to listen to you). In regards to family, you should think about them as much as possible. That way you will have no room to take their love or support for granted. On the other hand, the best advice you could give to a person locked within a four-wall world is to keep their head deep in the books in order to keep their minds free and engaged instead of isolated. What do you like to read? Besides following your own advice, what are you doing to prepare yourself to be successful on the outs — and by successful, we mean not coming back here!

Stop, Think and Say No

Why kill the next man?
So you can get your fix?
Is it really that important to protect that tough-guy image?
But in all reality, you the same as him!
I mean, he dies and his family cries.
And you go to jail, and your family cries.
Either way you kill him and you're still not on top
— and everybody hurts!
Is that what you want?
Come on think about it!
Do you really want that pain?
So when you pick up the dope, weed, or the gun
— think — and say, "No, that's not what I want."

-Leon, 150 Crew

From The Beat: When one young thug kills another, two lives are lost, but as you point out, that's not even the total cost — 'cause two families suffer a grave loss: the family whose loved one is in the grave, and the family whose loved one's in prison and can't be saved.

Lost Childhood

During the younger ages in my childhood, the only thing that was on my mind, other than school, was money. I would prefer to stay at home all day counting money rather than go to school.

I mean, money meant so much to me that when I did go to school, I had to have more than fifty cents in my pocket in order to have a good day — and I'm talking about when I was in elementary school. Yeah, that's how serious I was. Now I'm not saying I didn't go places or have fun as a kid, but for me, if it didn't involve me getting money, I wouldn't go or get involved at all. Sometimes I'd even get to feeling lost or even sick when I didn't have any money in my pockets. My mood would go from happy to depressed.

See, my grandpa spoiled me and gave me money a lot. Sometimes he might even spend up to two hundred dollars in a day, just to keep me happy! Money had gotten to me so bad that I'd ask the mailman for all four of my grandpa's checks every payday Friday faithfully. And every Christmas, my grandpa would give me three thousand dollars cash to spend on myself. I never had less than thirty presents under the Christmas tree!

Now you see why I got to loving money so much and why I feel the way I do about money.

-DeTay, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is an amazingly open and insightful piece about what an overriding role money can come to play in someone's life. What you don't say about the won't-go-to-school-with-empty-pockets attitude that seized you as early as elementary school, is the culture of teasing and put-downs that surrounds a youngster with no money in his pocket among his peers at even such a tender age. Your addiction (can we call it that?) to money is then reinforced by your grandfather's expressing his love for you in terms of monetary generosity in a sort of algebra where more money equals more love. In both cases, self-worth seems to be measured in terms of money. We won't argue that money is not important in this world, or at least having "enough" money, but even if we only look at your power to express yourself through the written word, we see a value in you that cannot be measured in money but in spirit, character and intelligence — for they are priceless qualities no one can buy.

Success Ain't For Everybody, Part 2

When I was in junior high, I always wanted to play for the school basketball team, 'cause that way I could showcase my skills on the court in front of hundreds of people.

As usual, it never happened. I mean, I will make the team and all, but the devil always finds something to keep me away from succeeding. I always wanted to walk across a high school stage with a diploma in my hand, but that will never happen.

I had dreams of being the best-known and the best rap star in the music business, and now look where I'm at — locked behind these four walls, for the most trivial thing when I could be out working on music with my cousins and trying to get a deal. But now it's a wrap for that there. The devil here again blocking my hopes and dreams.

-DeTay, 150 Crew

From The Beat: When you're young sometimes it's hard to see that success can only be measured in the skills you're acquiring. If hundreds of people watched you play, it wouldn't make you any better — and it doesn't make you any worse if no one's watching. Likewise, you don't need a high school stage to get your diploma, or your GED should you choose that route to college — success is acquiring the knowledge that high school degree represents! And yeah, you can rap, but your essays are successful, too, as a matter of fact. You need to take some of that intelligence to college, 'cause the only way to fail is to fall short on continuing to develop your skills and knowledge. Sooner or later, your reward will come, unless you give up — now that would be dumb.

I had to have more than fifty cents
in my pocket in order to have a good
day — and I'm talking about when
I was in elementary school.

RIP Andrew P.

eyes of a snake, never blink, never cry
until i see a loved one about to die
some just get drunk and high to forget the pain
but inside the tears are pouring like rain
too much of a coward to shed them tears
if you are hidin' them inside with your fears
but you're not too much of a man to make a female cry
tears
"so don't cry when it's the gunshots you hear and a loved
one drops"
that's what some say but they don't understand my spot
they don't understand my pain 'cause my cousin got popped
saturday night at ten forty-five he was slain
some people show no remorse when
something like that happens
they headed down the wrong course
so with a tragic moment we cry and shed tears
but we need to stay on track and get through it over the
years
'cause i'm a man, don't mean i don't shed tears
'cause i do and i ain't gon' hide it right here where i stand
as a graceful young man — r i p andrew p

-Ally-Bo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Forgive us for changing your title, but this is about more than your feelings — it's about the death of a loved one and how a real man handles it, not by denying tears and grief but by showing how he feels while accepting the necessity to continue to deal with life on life's terms. Your poem goes deep, acknowledges the falsely hard view touted in the street and the pen, but keeps it real and refuses to give in to reptilian detachment, 'cause a real man knows showing heart is the opposite of a weak reaction — he's no more afraid to feel than he is to take action, and he knows the real question in both cases is to do what's right. For a real man, respect and love take precedence over the fear of showing weakness. And just because a heart that goes numb is too weak to feel this, is no reason for a man to turn fake, staring out at the world through the dry eyes of stupid snake. Yet there's one more step for a real man to take. For when he dries his eyes, a better life he must make, both for himself and for those he loves, 'cause needless suffering and death defines the life of a thug. RIP Andrew P.



some just get drunk
and high to forget
the pain
but inside the tears
are pouring like rain

Interview With Big Vic

Q — How long you been here?
 V — About seven months.
 Q — What have you learned from this horror?
 V — It's not that bad. I learned, mistakes cost you a lot of time in your life.
 Q — What would your life be like if you were free today?
 V — It would have been good. Then again, I could have caught an even worse charge.
 Q — What was your life like before the hall?
 V — I was doing too much, like: smoking, drinking, partying, fighting, every chance I had.
 Q — Are you a fighter?
 V — I could be if I get pushed to that point, but I'd rather not.
 Q — But you said you fought every chance you got. What's up with that?
 V — I was out of control. Without this experience, it would have been worse. I've learned to control my temper.
 Q — Then what?
 V — Put my life in a positive direction, and make my family name proud.
 Q — What's the dream that you want to achieve?
 V — Family! Own my own business that I can leave for my kids to be proud of.
 Q — So, in a nutshell, what was Big Vic's life like growing up?
 V — It was up and down. I was the youngest of six kids. Didn't get a lot of attention. So I turned to the streets, although my parents always cared, because I did not see it.
 Q — Why do you suppose you were blind to their caring/love?
 V — I expected too much from them, even though they did all they could.
 Q — So how old were you when you fell prey to the streets? And what was the attraction?
 V — About eleven-and-a-half years old. Seeing the older homies with cars, girls, money — they had it all!
 Q — Were you or are you tied to a lifestyle? Block?
 V — Yeah.

Q — Gangs? Drugs? What?
 V — All: violence, dealing, stealing.
 Q — How did this affect home, family, education, all the positives?
 V — There weren't many positives, other than I was out of my house. And school, barely went.
 Q — Curious: What was the last grade you were serious about?
 V — January, 2005, middle of tenth grade.
 Q — You're a smart guy. How did you — no, why did you not utilize your skills?
 V — I didn't think school would help me achieve my goals, all of which came down to making money fast.
 Q — Did you know you had writing and teaching skills?
 V — I thought I had potential, but I never had a chance to act on it.
 Q — Who told you about your potential?
 V — No special person. Just when I tried to write, it came natural.
 Q — Is there a special person who motivates you? Helps you?
 V — My oldest brother, Luis.
 Q — What's up with Luis that you admire and respect?
 V — He was the oldest, always taking care of the family when Pops wasn't home. He was the first to graduate and go to college. He was always wishin' the best for me. Now he is a manager at a store. He never got caught in all this street bullshhh.
 Q — Good for him. We need to keep talking, but our time is coming to an end. Can we do it again? And can you leave us Big Vic fans with some words of wisdom?
 V — Yeah. Just do your time, don't let your time do you! One love. Stay up.

-Big Vic, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What a double treat. We love your words, even when it hurts to read them, maybe because they're so relentlessly honest and true — so maybe it's more like we respect your words, always. And David Inocencio always seems to ask the right questions to get at what's really going on, what really went down, and what's still possible. It was almost like watching batting practice before a big league game. David pitches it up there, and you swing with the integrity and intelligence that is Big Vic ... and a more than a few balls get parked over the fence. Seriously, there's a lot our readers can learn from you.

Heavy Hearted Traveling

As I wake I feel the shadows.
 They dance in vain.
 As the miles pass by me,
 I begin to wonder if life is worth this pain.
 Maybe instead of bringing the distance
 I should have bought a ticket.
 On this thought, I light a cigarette.
 The sun is blinding.
 With my fingers I shield my eyes from the light
 and remember a scar from long ago.
 I glance into my reflection
 and relive the terror of my past...
 so many secrets that I know I'll never let go.
 Then a shiver runs through my bones
 and I quake as though I'm cold.
 I inhale. The smoke rolls down my throat.
 Then I realize — the man is staring, awaiting my passport.

-Saundra, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Great title, and some great lines in your poem. We get the feeling that you've done this before. What inspired this poem? Tell us more about the roads you've traveled.

The Door to a Positive Life

the door to a positive life is living
 a positive life
 if you live a positive life
 good things happen to you
 to live a good life is
 not hanging around with negative people
 bad things will happen to you
 like going to jail
 or committing a crime
 that will have you serve a long time
 and you will not even see
 your family or baby for a long time
 so a positive life is handling your business
 and turning your life around
 and doing the right thing
 because you can live a good life
 with your girl and your family
 and probably have some kids
 so that's what a positive life is
 peace out beat
 this was yo' boy lil' sam
 god bless everybody

-Lil' Sam, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Thanks for an inspiring poem that points the way like the arrow on a one-way street sign. We hope more than a few of our readers will see what you're saying and do something about it, 'cause the consequences, either direction you take, are going to be real — real positive or real negative.

a positive life is handling your business
 and turning your life around

The Darkness

The darkness is devouring my soul and mind,
 constantly eating at my conscience,
 telling me to kill myself.

But I'll never give into those yucky thoughts.
 I can't, or won't let myself.

I have too many people who love me
 to just give up on them and give myself a permanent
 solution
 to a temporary problem.

-Enribe, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Thank goodness. And just in case, you probably should be talking with folks who can help you with those dark thoughts. There are many kind and caring people who devote themselves to helping others to deal with suicidal thoughts.

They Tried To Kill Me

Q-vole Beat readers? Como han estado? Espero que estan firme. Bueno, I'm doing all right. Still in max in San Francisco, and still in a cell.

Well, I've been here for almost six months now, and I've had a lot of thinking time, as you all can see. I've written piece over piece since the day I got here, never missing a week from The Beat. I've gotten to the point sometimes where I don't know what to write about anymore.

I got my trial coming up on the third Monday of September. By the time this gets published, I'll probably be stressing my ass off because of it. I have a feeling my public pretender already knows what my near future is and is just acting like she doesn't. At this point I'm praying for the best outcome but expecting the worst.

If I get found guilty of three attempted murders, I'm looking at a lot of time behind a locked door, probably only because it was against police officers. I am not guilty. As a matter a fact, they tried to kill me, don't you agree?

Well, it's about that time for me to go back to my temporary apartment. Trucha y al rato.

-Big Bad Goofy B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Actually, Goofy, we do agree that they tried to kill you (after you led them on a high-speed chase). But unfortunately, it doesn't much matter what we think. It matters what the judge thinks. You have such a good brain, Goofy, that in other circumstances, we believe you would have become a lawyer or a doctor or a professional of some kind. But you were raised in a particular way by particular people, and you gravitated toward the life that was presented to you, and it's that life that has put you here. We want to encourage you as strongly as we can to develop that brainpower so that you view the world through your own intelligent eyes, and through your own recognition of what's right and what's wrong. What you do will be the example your own child will follow. What example will that be? Anyway, we are keeping positive thoughts for your trial, and wish you nothing but the best.

To The Next Detainee

I would tell her to listen to all the rules and to make the best of this situation. I would tell her to ask the staff could she call her PO so her PO could tell her what's happening. I would tell her to be friendly and don't be messy 'cause that ain't goin' get you nowhere but in a whole lot of arguments and room time. Then when you get out everybody goin' be thinking they can run over you. So be nice and you will be able to stay out of trouble.

-Sybreea GU, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Do you think your stay in the hall would have been easier if someone had left a note like this on your pillow the first night you were here? This is all good advice. Do you always follow it?

Drama Family

If I had my own talk show it would be drama family. My first guest to be Fantasia, and some of friends dat got beatin' on from the 'hood, and a lot of girls dat rip and run da streets, and I on sergeant officers from Chowchilla prison come talk to them. Pregnant girls that don't know who their baby daddy is. And I would want Keyshia Cole to come for a visit and tell us about her life story, etc...

-Lene GU, SF/YGC

From the Beat: This sounds like a first-rate talk show, Lene. We would watch. What do you hope to learn from those Chowchilla sergeants?

What To Do

Nothing to do except sleep on my bed.

I listen to music to calm my spirits.

I'm looking at years, but I'm going for zero.

I'm trapped in ice, moving nowhere.

-Youngsta trapped, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Hey, we know who you are, but we respect your right to anonymity. But your writing is getting better and stronger. We hope you'd decide to take some credit for it soon. Write on.

RIP Marvin

I remember hearing him coming around the corner before I seen the car. Music would be hecka loud, and then I would see him, the all black primer Falcon with gold tints on vogues. Then I'd see a light-skinned ninja with braids. I would give him a sign saying "blow your horn" and you'd hear a funny horn.

There was a bunch of them who used to ride out back to back every weekend and sometimes during the week. It used to be at least five or six cars back to back. He used to come by my house and I used to ask, "when can we ride out?" and he used to tell me "tonight."

On weekdays, he used to tell me "on the weekend only, 'cause you got to go to school."

Man, keep it solid. I know you're waitin' on me, save me a spot.

Rest in Peace: Falcon Boy Marvin

-Curtis

From The Beat: Your boy is gone, but with these sharp details and terrific writing, you brought him to life for us, if just for the minute it took to read this powerful piece. It may not seem like much, but it's the closest thing to magic that we have. Keep writing, it will help you through life.

In This Room

I wake up every morning thinking I'm at home. Then I open my eyes and find out I'm in jail, doing time. Sometimes I'm just wondering if I was on the outs, would I be dead ... or doing another crime?

My mind just starts wondering when I'm inside them four walls in my room, like wondering why I'm here. In my head, I'm saying everythang so ugly out there on them streets! I'm glad I'm in here, because I think about where would I be if I wasn't here — probably dead or in the streets.

Why do I say that? Because if you not going to school, you bound to do a crime. And sitting in here is just wasting your time! But while you here, get yo' mind straight. Do your program, get out, and go right, not left.

-Tae, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You make a lot of sense here. And you're right that if you just go back to the streets, then you really have wasted your time here. But if you get your mind straight while you're in here, start thinking clear, you don't have to volunteer to live a life of fear or die young like the next one.

Real Show

If I had my own talk show, it would be about some real shhh like trying to keep youth out of CYA, Juvenile and jail (pen), 'cause shhh nowadays is getting real hectic and dis beef shhh is serious as hell. Ninjas droppin' like flies.

But my talk show will help young ninjas like myself trying to do something with they life like get jobs and stay out of here feel me.

-Darius B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This sounds like it would be a very important reality talk show to have. But what would you tell your audience about the best way to stay free and move their lives forward? Who would you have as guests? How would you get people to watch?

Doors To A Positive Life

The doors to a positive life is staying out of jail. I also need to do what I need to do and that is staying in school and getting a job. The door to a positive life is being more of a man than saying I am and doing half of what a man would do.

What got me to sit in this hellhole wasn't positive, not even negative, it was only illegal. Is it really wrong from protecting my life and those who were close to me?

-Queese B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We can't answer your final question, Queese. We don't know if you really had to do whatever it was that led you here in order to protect yourself and your loved ones, or whether there might have been other ways — better ways — to accomplish that goal. But we do know that you are 100% right that a positive future is built on a bedrock of education, so staying in school is, or should be, your first priority. The fact that you realize words are not what makes a man tells us that you are already moving out of childhood and into responsible adulthood — and that is all to the good.

Bad News

As I'm here still thinking to myself. I just got some bad news about my brother, and he's the closest brother I got. I'm not going to put him out there like that, so I just want to say what up with it bra bra.

Damn, I remember when me and my brother were little. We used to steal a lot of cars, we are hella close.

We did everything together. I remember when we were little, like seven and eight, we used to fight hella people together. And we grew up and slept in the same room ever since we were born. As we got older we still were still hella close, and we'd go to the sideshows and get drunk, and get money.

We come up on hella rims, 20" and 22" slap and whatever you need we got that shhh for you.

I'm in the Hall, and the way I found out what he was in here for wasn't wasn't even cool. I saw his folder on the table, and was like "what the f-, that's my brother," and they wouldn't even tell me what he's in here for.

So I waited for a visit from my mom and as I walked in I saw her crying. She told me what happened to my brother and I was like damn, not my brother. After that they finally let me visit him. As we talked tears rolled down my eyes cause we are hella close and we hugged. I had to say my goodbyes and the last thing I said to him was "I Love You Bra"

I love you bra, keep your head up bra, see you when you get out. Love your, little bra.

-Lil' Vee, 150 Crew

From The Beat: There's so much heart and sadness in this piece. The world needs to know that when one person gets locked up it can destroy a whole family. Your brother knows you love him, and knows you care. Now you have to push to care for yourself, get out of the system and be the somebody you know you really are. For you AND for him.

My Way To Have a Positive Life

My way is to go back to school and get a high school diploma, or maybe get my GED since right now I'm right here locked up.

Being in a place like this ain't the way to go, 'cause I got someone telling me that I have to use the bathroom at a certain time; and I gotta shower with a lot of people; and I gotta take a shhh with like ten other young adults in da game room.

I want to help my family financially and mentally, 'cause right now I'm right here and my mom worried 'bout me. So the way to go, is just to walk a straight line.

-Jose, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's not like anyone plans on getting caught and living the life you describe, having forfeited the simplest freedoms. But to stay free you have to make a plan that doesn't put your freedom at risk, then follow that plan like a straight line.

My Love To My Dead Homies

What's good Beat? My name is Flat Head and I want to tell y'all about my dead homies. They was my role models. They always told me to go to school and get my diploma and my GED so I won't be in up like them. So I trying to stay out the way and be to myself. So if y'all big homies tell y'all to do good and go to school, y'all might want to listen to them.

-Flat Head B5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We agree with this excellent advice, Flat Head. Are you trying to get your GED in here? How close are you?

The door to a positive life is being more of a man than saying I am . . .

The Good, The Bad, And The Ugly

How can the good life come out of the bad life?

You have to leave all of your old ways back where they came from,

if it ain't positive, because you have to try to do good.

I know some of us people just know bad.

That's an ugly fact.

But we have to do new things in life to change our life!

Get back at you, Beat Within.

-Choyce, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You're hearts in the right place, till someone you love gets killed and anger twists your face. It's what happens next that tests your will to do what's best and bring positive good to the lives of all in the 'hood.

The Door To A Positive Life

What's up Beat, this is your carnal, Dark, coming out of Oakland. And I think that my door to a positive life would be finishing whatever time the judge gave me and getting out and getting my GED.

Man, I haven't been to school in like a few years or so, and I'm very behind! But also in between getting out and getting my GED, I have to find a job — because being eighteen is just around the corner.

-Dark, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Achieving those two goals, getting your GED plus getting (and keeping) a job, will take work. But the hardest part may still be leaving your old ways (and friends who still want slang, bang, steal, rob and hit quick licks) behind you. That's your number one job, or your two goals will quickly dissolve.

Getting' Out

When I get out of here I want to keep my life going by doing positive things like things I have already been doing plus more.

Like right now I work with my dad with his hot dog business and making custom T-Shirts. It's already a successful business.

I'm also going to start working at the local boys and girls club two blocks away from my home. Then I'm going to have a dance class for kids that like dancing because all the kids that see me dance ask me how I do it and they want to learn so I told them one day I was going to start and that they were going to be ready and tell everybody.

People that see me dance all have different things to say about me but the word that never say is that I'm weak and I always get good compliments from a lot of girls and dudes too but not like I get from the girls though.

But I would also like to get closer to my family and catch up with the things I've missed out on while I was I here.

-Gary, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What an impressive "to do" list! You are an inspiration to all of us. We can't wait to see you success in everything you do.

I feel like I can't be a good daddy
being locked up all the time because
he's gonna look at his dad and see
that he ain't never around and he
gonna grow up like
I did without a father.

The Life I Live

The life that I live is Ok but could be better because of me seeing a lot of people getting killed day by day. Things out here isn't cool, out in the streets either have you dead or locked up behind bars. I hate to see our young teenagers these days getting killed left and right. The life that I live is good and bad but it also feels normal. Growing up around drug dealers my mom and dad warned about me every second, every minute. I think that it's time for me to get my mind right and start leading my friends in the right direction.

The good thing about my life is that I have a mother that keeps a roof over my head makes sure that I'm going to school. The other good thing about my life is that God has given me a gift to play basketball. Now all I have to do is get my mind right and stay on top of my game like the Spurs. The bad about my life is that I'm in here for a gun charge and seeing I'm not that type of person to be in here.

-Omari, 150 Crew

From The Beat: If you are a leader among your friends, you have a lot of power. You can lead them down the right or wrong path. It sounds like you're thinking about how you can lead them down the right path, and it sounds like you have got a family who will support you and not stand in your way. You're a lucky young man.

sin

**The sin that made me once happy
Pleasure no longer there**

The sin I once wanted and needed
I no longer care

The sin that once had me blind
I no longer cant' see

The sin that once made me unlocked up
Now has me un-free

The sin I wasn't aware of
I've been personally introduced
I found what I was doing wrong

And I want to live correctly

Get a job but graduate High School especially

-Loo, 15 0Crew

From The Beat: Your poetry shows us what a powerful tool the pen is. We're curious what changed in you, how you realized the sin wasn't making your life better.

My Son And I Against the Whole World

This Baby Bl I just want to let everybody know that I am a father now, but yeah it feels good now that I am a father. I just want to get out and take care of my responsibility and that's taking care of my son, going to school, and to find a job. But the number one thing that I want to do is stay out of jail and be a good father and to be in my son's life forever.

I feel like I can't be a good daddy being locked up all the time because he's gonna look at his dad and see that he ain't never around and he gonna grow up like I did without a father. It's hard because a woman can't raise a man.

My son is about to be three months and I've been locked up for almost two months and I'm getting sent to a group home so hopefully I can see him more. But me realizing what I did to come in here I wouldn't ever have done it if my son would have came out three days sooner.

God got something planned for me and I think that God wants me to be in here because I can know how hard it is in life and to let my son know that he don't want to be going the way I did. But I'm out, keep your head up family.

-Baby B1, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Thanks for sharing your most sincere thoughts about your baby's life and your life. It's your turn to stop the cycle of dads not being in their son's life. We see that you are strong enough for the challenge.



RIP To My Baby Sis Jamie

Sis. it ain't like it use to be. Without you me and mom still talking about you 'cause we can't get you out of our head. Sis, I just want to say we really miss you. And Dad. Sis, tell Dad what's up. I'll see y'all up there Sis. Keep your head up there. Make sure you save a place for me. Love you sis and dad one love to all, and to my cousin Jt, much love. R.I.P Jamie.

-G-Love, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Losing a sister and a father! You have such heavy weights on your heart. Thank you for sharing this personal note to your sister with The Beat! Keep telling stories about her forever, it will keep her alive in your heart.

Pain and Pressure

Only thing I can think about in here is when I'm going to get out. I seem like the longer the days the deeper the drought. I have to change my ways either way it go because I have a baby on the way and the love I want to show.

My mom died when I was nine. So pain and suffering provoked me to grind.

It's hard in these streets it ain't easy to live, especially where I'm from everything is negative.

My cousin just got hung in jail and I can think about the pain and the pressure that's about to reveal.

-Eugene, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You have suffered so much pain and loss for a young man. Your challenge is to turn that pain into a positive life force and not let it send you down down. Stay strong, live for your child, and live for yourself!

I don't even like reading but since I've been here I read five books, and I'm on my second week of being "locked up."

Today

Today has been pretty messed up. I found out that I have tuberculosis, and I got kicked out of class. But at least I'm not as bad off as other kids up in here. You know what I'm saying? But life goes on.

-Mike, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: This was very distressing news, Mike. We asked about it, and by now, you must know that that was a false positive - the TB test you took. We're very glad about that.

"Turf Talk" (The Television Show)

The talk show I would run, would be called Turf Talk. It would target the youth: Mexican, Black, White or Asian; because every turf has a different race.

And the guests would mostly be OG's or people who turned from the streets. I would talk about why it's not cool to be in gangs and about not getting caught up in the system. I would be the host, and every now and then I would have a co-host.

-Unsigned, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Oh no! Of all the pieces not to sign! Now we have a great show all set to go, and we don't know the name of its host!

Which Way

My mother always told me that angels speak the truth.

On my balcony, late night,
wondering what they'd say,
listening for echos.

I'm holding a basket of flowers,
visiting my homeboy's grave.

The wind making noises,
making this feel just like a dream.

-Mike, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Write on Mike. You've surprised us. We knew you were a good writer, but we didn't know you were a poet. We'd like to see more of your work.

Sick of It

Yeah I'm sick of being in jail because I have a family to take care of: like my mom, grandma, because right now we are in a bad state right now. I need to be home to support them.

Mom worked so hard to make us happy but now I'm in jail my mom blames herself for my mess up.

I would say I'm sorry for all my messin' up! That's what I would tell to my mom because of my mess up. If I had another chance I would change my lifestyle. How I would change my attitude, my party life, drugs and alcohol life I want to complete quit. So I'm fed up of being the bad one here and be a good kid the one before I ef up again.

-Wayne, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You're lucky because you're still alive, you'll get out soon, and that means you DO have another chance coming your way. You just have to make the most of it, which we think you have the strength to do.

Shadows and Secrets

I try to hide from the shadows
because I can hear their footsteps,
and the scarred memories of the past.
But in the mirror I still see the reflection
and a secret no one will even ask about.

-Noel, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Wonderful, mysterious poem.

Locked Up

When you're in the room and you're thinking about court dates, and when you're going to get out and stuff like that it will stress you out. It's not going to get you nowhere, besides you going through a long day.

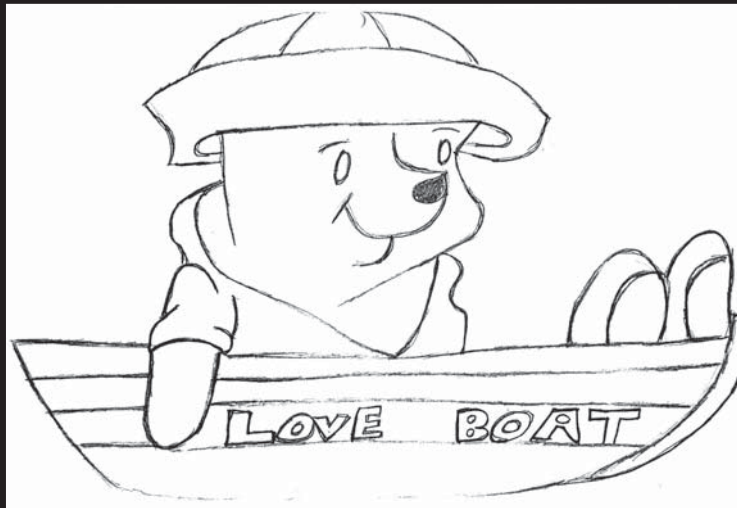
If you just think of something to get you through like for examples of things I do, exercise, think about what you did wrong in the past (not just what got you in for) think about the future of what you could do to fix things or how you could just look past it, don't worry about time, and one big thing is read.

I say reading is one main important thing. I don't even like reading but since I've been here I read five books, and I'm on my second week of being "locked up."

Another thing I think about my outside relationships with females. I try to think and write her or call every chance I got that's what I do. Like my mom say when she visit me "keep yo head up"

-Rone, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Great advice. We all need support to get through hard times, and your words are added to The Beat's long history of young people giving each other tips to survive the loneliness of the cell.



My Change of Plans

When I get out, I plan to go to school and graduate from high school. Then I want to focus on taking care of my daughter, because I don't want my daughter to be like I've been up to now.

I don't want my daughter to go juvenile hall. I want to give her a good role model, set a good example for her, because if I don't, she's going to do bad things like I did.

So when I get out, I plan to get a job and support my girlfriend and also try to help my mom out. I plan to do the best with my life, not waste it on doing drugs. I've realized that is just a waste of my life, and I don't want to do that lifestyle no more! My girlfriend needs me to help her with our daughter.

-Ceasar, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You thinking pretty clearly in this thoughtful and inspiring piece. We strongly recommend you go at least a year without doing drugs or alcohol, because it's way too easy to slide back into that life style — so don't leave the door cracked open but shut it and lock it. 'Cause everything you say here is right.

Why Me?

I'm trying to do my best. I'm trying to stay to myself. But why me? While I've been keeping my mouth shut and my ears open, it seems like it's just making things worse. It seems like whatever gets written about you in staff files just sticks with you. Then if staff hears something about you, they don't give a second thought before jumping to the wrong conclusion thinking that it's right.

But this time, I proved them wrong. So the haters will just have to try a little bit harder next time they're trying to rain on my parade. I just know that I got to do me, stay solid, do my program and get out fast! And I love the people who got my back for me, staff or detainee.

To the haters I just want to say, stop smiling in my face when I know the whole time you want me to take a fall so you can take my place. You may try to stab me in the back, but I am a soldier. So stop, because whatever is in the dark will one day come to light, and if you got God on your side, He will never lead you to destruction.

-Aleshia, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The real key is to just do you, do your program and stay solid with yourself. Then you don't have to worry about anyone else. And if once in a while something unfair happens to you, don't trip 'cause it will happen to other people, too. Someone else might look good when you're in pain, but don't compare your inside with someone else's outside. If, as you say, haters are jealous of you, they're just hurting themselves with their hate even if they're smiling at you.

Next Man In This Room

To the next detainee in my room: This place sucks, but it's not the end of the world. Each day feels like two, but there are different things you can do to make the time go by quicker, or to make your time in this room worthwhile.

Reading books is the best way, as I see it, to make the days seem shorter. Also while in this room, you should do a lot of thinking about the things you did on the outs that got you in trouble. And you need to think about the things you are going to do when you get out that are going to make you a better person.

Being here isn't fun, but if you're strong-minded and just try to keep yourself occupied, it's easy. Have fun. Bye.

-Tom, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Everyone's heard the phrase, "When the going gets tough, the tough get going." However, in this piece you tell the next man exactly what that means when you're living in a room in juvenile hall — get going with reading, thinking over the past and how you can change in the future, and stay occupied. Not only does the time pass faster, but you use your time well.

My Television Show

It will be a story about my life, not just a talk show. It will relive my life from my abused childhood through my teen years.

It will show events in my life, from how my father once struggled to put food on the table, to the tragic deaths of family members. For example, it will show my uncle getting stabbed in 1997 and my grandpa who died from a stroke in 2003. Those deaths had a big impact on my mom, my family and me. My drug and alcohol abuse, I want that to be in my story.

My mom does all kinds of jobs, from babysitting to being an office worker for the state, and she still struggles right now to pay all the bills and stuff like that — working two jobs. She now has to worry about financing me for the rest of my life, 'cause it won't be easy to get a job with a felony on my record.

Well, that about brings my life up to now, 'cause I was jailed for something I didn't do. But now I've realized that I did do some things that put me in harm's way even if I didn't do what they say I did. So I just have to step my game up to be a grown man while I'm locked up trying to beat this felony charge.

When I get out, I want to quit my bad life style and be a good role model to my family. I want to be a rapper, so I can make some real money to support my family in the Philippines. Well, I hope for the best for myself in the future. So, this is some of my life's story, and it is from the heart.

-Wayne, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's important to recognize the part you played in putting yourself in this situation, even though you are innocent of the charges in question. Living that street life puts you in jeopardy of losing your life or your freedom in more ways than one, and catching a charge for someone else is just one of the ways you can fail. It sounds like you've had a rough life but that you've kept a good heart, and now you realize that you want to do better in life, for the sake of family members here and in the Philippines — and for yourself, too. While rap can make fast money, there are many other ways to stay free and earn a legal wage, and if you put a little away each day, your money can grow fast enough.

Success Ain't For Everybody, Part One

Since my grandpa died, I haven't had anything good to be proud of. It seems like whenever something good is about to happen for me, the devil is always there to stop it.

I'm starting to feel like not trying anymore, because when I try to achieve or accomplish something or just work hard on something, I never seem to complete it. I never make it! I always fail. I mean, this happens to me all the time, whether it's with school, streets, sports, music or jail — there's always somebody or something that gets in my way and knocks me down.

Most people that know me, don't see it the way I do. They just believe that I have a problem, which I don't! It's just that luck isn't for me. I'm a struggler, with only twenty-five per cent of the full hundred per cent of hope. My number one dream is to be successful. Yet, I guess, being successful ain't everybody, because if it was, I wouldn't be behind these locked doors.

And like I said, here is where I am going to stop looking for success and all those good things. So from now on, to my mind, whatever happens, good or bad, just happens. I don't give a what anymore — they don't! So why should I care?

-DeTay, 150 Crew

From The Beat: If everybody cared but you, it wouldn't make any difference whether everybody cared or not — 'cause the only one that truly counts when it comes to you, is you, yourself. Likewise if no one cares about you but you, then you can still make it through, past all the obstacles that come your way, whether they're people, places or things. We not saying you won't have frustrations, setbacks or failures; but if you refuse to give up on yourself and your goals, at least the good ones ('cause crime really doesn't pay in the end) — then there's no one on earth who can stop you but you. So don't be your own worst enemy. Go legit and then don't quit!

Do Positive, Not Negative

My door to a positive way in life is: Going to Duke University! But to do that, I have to think positive, like have a full schedule so I won't get hooked up in negative things.

Then another thing I need to do is: Don't disrespect my mom. 'Cause she love me, no matter what! But the thing is, I did things to lose her trust, like hit my sister or like talking when she's talking. So it's goin' to take long time to earn her trust back, but I will eventually earn it back.

Another thing I need to do is: Stop hangin' around with the wrong people! Because if I don't, my mom burying me! But I want to live so my mom can see me go to Duke. And that's my positive thing!

-Roy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Duke would be way past cool, but don't set your sights on just one school. There are many more than one great college! So just make sure you get your do-right on and increase your knowledge. Accentuate the positive, eliminate the negative.

My Door Is My Family

The door to my positive life when I get back out, will be my family. They're the door to everything positive in my life, and all I want to do is take care of them.

They're always there for me, and that's why all want to do is be there for them. I want to help take care of my lil' sis'. And my big brother is getting out of jail next year. He goin' to keep it lit when he get out — and that's my door to my positive life.

-Cash Amos, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What do you mean by positive life? We associate "keep it lit" with living the fast life and chasing fast money. That road just leads back to incarceration for your big brother and you both, and will do your sister no good at all. She needs you, not some money that's gone as fast as it comes.

Collect Call

damn just talking to you just blows my mind
 baby you sexy and so damn fine
 i'm wondering is this love true
 because you got me thinking
 thinking about you
 everyday i call you collect
 just to get some words off my chest
 but next thing i hear is
 "thirty seconds left"
 then before i get to say "i love you"
 the phone disconnects
 so then i call back again
 but the person that answered was yo' friend
 talking 'bout you ain't here
 but i'm thinking in my head
 "this girl is somewhere near"
 she just leaving a ninja mad as hell
 but i can't do nothin' 'cause i'm in jail
 so what the hell can i do
 i can't hug, kiss, nor make love to you
 you say you grown so stop playing games
 you sending hella letters but yo' words the same
 you keep asking me do i think you sleeping around
 don't ask me 'cause you just turning my smile into a
 frown
 you said you gon' stay by my side
 but you ain't showing me you ready and down to ride
 you just think this life is all about getting high
 baby you playing with my life
 i just wanna treat you right
 and make you my wife
 i think you and i was meant to be
 so now i just wanna know will you marry me
 i don't think i could get up and leave
 this love is something we both have to achieve
 i love you my beautiful queen
 baby this is how i feel and what i mean

-Ti Baby, 150 Crew

From The Beat: There's a type of poem called a lover's lament, when a lover is complaining about how things went since that promise to be true, and that's what we hear in this poem from you. Of course, it's easy to get 'noid when you're locked in a cell and all you know about the one you love is what she will tell. Really you don't know, but if she's writing you lots of letters, that sounds pretty cool. On the other hand, it's a strange time to propose marriage, man, when you're complaining that she puts a frown on your face again and again. Maybe you just want that certainty that your love is shared equally, to confirm it was always meant to be. But nothing can do that very well, as long as you're still living locked in a cell. Do your best to stay up, and don't torment yourself by doubting her love.

I am scared of losing my life,
 because I do not want to die
 before I get to live my life

Headache's a Bad One

I got a bad headache, and the medication they give me for it, does not work. I need to see a doctor! This is bad. Every time I get one, my head blacks out, and I get mad more.

But I need someone to talk to about it. I need a lady counselor to talk to, because I don't like to talk to guys like that. They will tell your business to other people. But I am telling you so that I won't go crazy tonight.

-Demetrus, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It is the nature of The Beat that other people will know what you tell us, but what you don't know is, even if some fools throw your business back in your face 'cause they're just haters — there will be many who read your words, not just at Camp or even 150 Hall, but all around the Bay Area, who feel what you say and understand. Maybe they even feel the same way, and now feel less alone in their hearts, knowing how you feel. But don't wait to tell a counselor, any counselor, that you are having severe migraine headaches and need to see a doctor since the medication you're taking doesn't seem to help. And ignore fools.

What Am I Scared Of?

I am scared of nothing, because can't nothing scare me! But I am scared of losing my life, because I do not want to die before I get to live my life. I want to have a wife and kids, so I can have something on this earth when I leave it.

I am scared when I think of my grandma dying, because I can't imagine living my life without her here. I love my grandma more than anything on this earth, and my grandpa, too. They was the only ones that treated me right when I was growing up. And my auntie, too — even though she got mad at me a lot, I know she loves me more than my other family members do.

But I am scared to go the Pen' — I just want to be free! I did not want to be here, and here I am. This is why I am scared of going to the Pen' someday.

-Demetrus, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your grandma's love for you will never die, and as long as you live, it will live in your heart — if you honor it there and remember her love and wisdom. And her spirit will visit you in dreams to help you through hard times. Maybe it does that already. As for you're being here: you've learned the hard way not to ever get caught with stolen property, even if you didn't know it was stolen. Just earn yours, and take what's your own.

Life At Seventeen

My life at the age of seventeen: It feels like my life is over with! I get a lot of headaches, and I am going through a lot of problems — but don't nobody care about me. To tell you the truth, people hope I will die! A lot of people told me that, "You die!"

I don't know why, but my dad don't see me, or only when he wants to come see me. But my grandma told me not to depend on no one but her, because they probably don't like me. But I love my grandma more than anybody on this earth, and my great grandma, too. They are my heart. Both mean the same to me, and I will love them, no matter what!

I hope I get to see my great grandmother again. So, I will close with these words: I love you, Grandma — RIP Great Grandmother.

-Demetrus, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What comes out of the mouths of fools at Camp, says nothing about you, but volumes about them. They hold life cheap, theirs and anyone else's. Maybe they have no one at all in their lives whom they know truly loves them. You do! You know how much your great grandma loved you (and loves you still in spirit), and you know how much your grandma loves. Her advice about depending on only her comes from that love, but really you need to depend on yourself — you can depend on her love, but depend on yourself to make the right choices and do the right thing. As to why your father doesn't come more often, it probably says more about the state of his life than of his love for you.

Love

Love, let me tell you about: It is good sometimes. There is a poem about love that I want to tell you about. Let me tell you, my love is like a river that never ends. It goes deep as an ocean.

You're the one and only one for me, and this comes from the bottom of my heart. And I hope you don't play with it, because it came from the bottom of my heart. So I will lover you, if you will love me. And I will make you my lady. I hope you make me your man. I will do whatever it takes to keep you in my heart.

But if you cheat on me, it will break my heart in half. Then I will look for another girl to give all of my love to.

-Demetrus, 150 Crew

From The Beat: There can be no better start to love than this. Nor is your warning a threat but an explanation of what cheating will do to your heart, break it — and the love for her will bleed away. Yet hearts heal to find another to love another day.

My Relationship With My Dad (and His Dad)

My relationship with my dad is good. My dad loves me, and he loves my mom, and my brothers and sister, too. But he got a new girlfriend. So he and my mom broke up.

It is okay. All the things that I want, he will buy it for me. But aside from that, I love my dad with all my heart, and I would be mad if he died — because then I would not have anybody to talk to like that.

I hope my grandpa on my dad's side, is okay. He was sick, and I wanted to talk to him and see how he was doing — but I don't see him like that. So this is just to say that I hope he is all right. When I go on my home visit, I will get to see him then.

-Demetrus, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's rough when your parents break up, even when they both are still a part of your life. And yes, it is important to have a man (or men) in your life you can talk over issues, problems, events and goals in your life. We hope your grandpa is feeling better and that you get to see him soon.

Being In Love

Being in love is two people that like each other in a way that no one else will. Being in love is nothing to play with, because if you play with someone's heart, you will hurt them and yourself!

Me, I was in love before, and she played with my heart. I've stopped getting in relationships like that, because I don't want no one to hurt me again. So, that is why it is hard to be in love with someone who plays a lot of games and plays with your heart. But I am not going to let that happen no more.

I am going to tell them that if they be with me, they can't play no games with me — because if they play with my love, their heart will be broken and I will leave them alone. But that is all I got to say about that. So I am going to be in love with you, Baby Girl.

-Demetrus, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It does seem like there can be good love and bad love, and when you find yourself in love that hurts you all or most or just too much of the time, that's bad. More power to you if you've learned from experience how to walk away from bad love, even if it hurts, because you know it will only hurt more if you stay. Now if you can find a girl who feels the same way, maybe you can both keep love good, and in your hearts to stay!

Why Do People Hate On Me?

Why? I don't know, but every time they see me doing something, they all want to hate on me. It seem like the staff don't know that.

So when I do something, I get in trouble. So what kind of thing I can do without getting in trouble? When I get something, people hate. I am not a hater. If whoever got more than me, I will not care. This is the kind of thing that make me mad.

I think I am going to die with all these headaches! I cannot do nothing. The doctor's not doing nothing about it. Put that together with how I hold all of my anger in so I can let it all out at one time — and this headache make me want to hurt someone, or hurt myself! I am trying to stick through it, but I don't know if I can.

-Demetrus, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Invisible disabilities, like those headaches, are hard for people to understand, even doctors. Plus the doctor may think you're just trying to get drugs by exaggerating the pain. Try telling him you don't want anything narcotic, period, but that you need something more than ibuprofen or acetaminophen. Meanwhile, we know you can stick it through. When you start to get mad, focus on you, not on whatever it is that's triggering your anger — 'cause getting mad only makes everything worse, the hate, the headache, the program, everything! Don't indulge your anger. Don't go over and over in your mind what's making you mad. Write about it when you can. Then let it go.

My Relationship With My Mom (and My Grandma)

My relationship with my mom is not that good right now, because she treats me like a little puppy. She don't treat me like the other kids! But, anyway, my grandma is my mom because she treats me better than my mom does.

Also my mom will give me something, then take it right back! I mean, I give my mom things, so why can't she can treat me right? Because it is not right for her to do that. I am her kid, too, but she don't act like it. So, that is my mom. She got her funny ways.

So my grandma is my mom. And I don't care if my mom gets mad at me or not, because my grandma will be there for me when I need help. I hope she will always be the greatest person in my life.

-Demetrus, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It sounds like there is some serious miscommunication going on between your mother and you. It is a blessing that you have your grandmother (and your dad, too, right) to go to when you can't seem to get along with your mom. Sometimes the child has to be more mature than the parent, and as you grow older, maybe it will become easier for you.

Anxious

What it do, Beat! This yo' boy, Young Spooks, coming at y'all from this so-called max unit. I'm just chillin', waiting to get shipped out to CYA.

I hope I get picked up sometime soon! Because this place is hella bootsy! I need some new surroundings. There are too many childish people here. But I'm not trippin', because while I'm here I'm enjoying the company of a couple of my loved ones, standing our ground.

Well, I don't have much more to say. So to all locked up over here behind these AlaCo walls, stay up — and don't let no one get you down. Alrato.

-Lil' Spooks

From The Beat: There's not much harder than their telling you that they'll pick you up to move from the Hall to the Y, and then not showing up when they say. Expectations and their disappointment, are what gets to our hearts and inside our heads, more than anything concrete. It's natural to be anxious, but it sounds like you're handling it the best you can, not tripping.

Time Goes Fast

What's up, Beat. This Dreamer from Hayward, keepin' it solid up in Camp. It's hella cool up here, compared to the Hall. I already been here for a week, and it feels like I got here yesterday.

I got a few more weeks until I go home on a "home visit". So, by the time this Beat comes out, I'm'a already have been at la casa con mi familia! Anyways, to all behind the wall, keep it solid and do your time with your head held high. And to all those who are stressin' because you got a Camp commitment — it's not that bad up here!

I can't wait just to do my time and get back to the people who love me, like my mom and my baby'mama — and my child! Anyway, time to wrap it up. To all, stay up. Alrato. (A loves D)

-Dreamer

From The Beat: Compared to those who stay stressing even at Camp, you're doing very well indeed, handling your business and doing your program. But now it's not just about getting through your time (program), though that's important. Perhaps more important is figuring out what you need to know and/or do, to stay out after your release. Use HV's for this and not to slip.

Camp Get a Ninja Mad

What's up, Beat? This Lil' Bee, ya heard? But I'm at Camp, and I can't even get a whole weekend pass because the staff always try to find a way to write me up. But I'm go' try and do better so I get my whole pass! But I'm out.

-Lil' Bee

From The Beat: Sometimes we think you don't listen to what we have to say, but we're glad you're going to try to do better — 'cause that's the better way. Look at your part in what brings you down, and then turn that part around.

Why Did He Hit Me With His Car

This man was parking, and he was in a hurry. So he was going fast because that was all he cared about. And he hit me! But God let me live another day.

Well, I'm writing this because I got hit by a car when I was little. And the doctor said my teeth was not going to grow back (they had been pushed way back up into my gums). And I almost died! But I thank God for letting me live.

It is by God's grace that I am here right now. So I pray to God, giving my thanks for letting me live another day. Thank you, God.

-Demetrus

From The Beat: It's so easy for any of us to get so caught up in what we're doing that we cease to see anything else. Thank God your survived, and thank God the doctor was wrong about your teeth. Now show your gratitude by living a good life, for God's sake.

The Door to the Positive Life

it is hard to find the key
but easy to lose it once you get it

-Lil' Jacob

From The Beat: True enough. So work to use it, don't lose it.

We Love You, Mar

Mar, you my ninja. I love you ninja, and you know there's nothing I wouldn't do for you. Mar, don't die. Stay with us. 'Cause you know yo' young ninjas won't give up! You ain't had enough! Lazy eye from the weed smoke dat you choke. Watch yo' dreads blow as you go nutty bro'!

-Choyce

From The Beat: It's not gunplay but love that shows a dying man the way back to life. Forget revenge, but make sure your love gets sent, if only by prayer on angels wings — sing!

Run?

Wassup, Beat! This is the homie Shagy. But, yeah, I'm up here at Camp, and it's hella weak! I think I'm gonna run. Even though I got a CYA commitment, I ain't even trippin'.

I got thangs to do, like I said. I got to be out for my lil' ma' Quince. And anyways 'cause they be tryin'a do too much up here. So most likely, I'm'a run, unless my cousin come up here, I mean, I got a lot on my mind right now, and I'm goin' crazy! They tryin' to get my homie for murder!

I have to get out of here one way or another and handle my biz! But I'm'a let y'all go. A'ight. Stay up. One love.

-Shagy

From The Beat: We hope you're still at Camp to read this piece and realize just how much you were tripping and how crazy it was making your thinking. If you have things to do, how will going to CYA help you get anything done? And if your friends are catching murder charges, why would you want to be out there right now anyway? It's like you want to volunteer to be put away. Hope you come to your right mind and leave this craziness behind.

Smile to Frown

This is how I feel being here, because people are always messing with me. They think I am a punk, but I am not. I just don't like that. So I hope they can feel how I feel, because I don't like talking shhh!

I like to be happy, that's all. I just want to get along with everybody, so I don't have to get no other people in this. All I got to say is — stay out of my way, and I will not get mad at you. I will shake your hand. Okay.

-Demetrus

From The Beat: The culture of trash talk is so pervasive at Camp that it makes you look like a freak (or coward, or whatever) if you just want to get along with everybody, be as happy as possible, do your program, stay out of trouble and go home. It's hard not to let their trash into your head. It's like they're all adrenaline addicts and drama queens, or they'd leave you be. Just do the best you can, and when you do get mad, don't hold onto the anger by nursing a grudge. Let go and let God [deal with it].

Chicano Status

it's a way of life
and how you live
also how you think
viva la raza

-Fairlas

From The Beat: There was a day when Cesar Chavez led the way, and showed Chicanos (by his personal example of non-violent resistance to oppression and exploitation) how to live and how to think — for the welfare of the entire community, not just a drug turf's impunity. Now that's status! Viva la raza!

What I Wanna Say

What's up wit' it, Beat? This Lil' T from Oakland. I just wanna say RIP to my fallen ninjas. Well, I went to the hood for my first turf visit, and I came back and got a dirty!

My family's cool and my girl is doing good. I'm just glad that I went to the 'hood, but this Camp is bootsy! I would hit the gate, but I'm'a keep my head up and do what it takes. And my ninjas are up here, so I ain't trippin'.

Sacks keep comin' and my racks keep flippin'. But Camp Sweeney ninjas just keep on snitchin'! But I'm through wit' this stuff, 'cause it is just a set up. I love you, girl, and I'm'a keep my head up.

-Lil' T

From The Beat: Pushing sacks when you're doing time in Camp just means you're not facing the facts — so your greed is setting yourself up to fail this program, and no telling next where you'll be going by court order. We hope that's the stuff you're through with, otherwise your girl and your family will be even longer missed the next time 'round. We hate to sound like it's a threat, 'cause all we're trying to do is get you to see what's best for your family, your girl and yourself.

RIP Emmitt

what's up brah
what's going on
up there brah
be safe
and watch
over the family

-Lil' Jay

From The Beat: In the bosom of God, truth shines clear. Emmitt may have something to teach you, if you're ready to hear.

Baseball Game on Wednesday

Today we had a game. It was all right, but I got in trouble. Now I cannot go home this week to see my grandma, but I cannot do nothing about it. I got to wait for another two weeks. My grandma is going to be mad at me.

I always tell everybody, "Don't touch the glove that I use." I put my glove in the bag when I was at practice. How is someone else going to take my glove when he was not even there for practice. That is not no fair to me! You can ask anyone on the team which glove I always use, and they will tell you, "The one without the silver thing on it."

Sometimes it seems like people here are just trying to get me in trouble because they don't want me to stay here at Camp. But I don't need no incident report.

-Demetrus

From The Beat: Just hold on to that last sentence and hold onto your temper. It sounds like you must have lost your temper at the game when someone else took your glove. We agree that it wasn't fair, but you can't let yourself get tripped up by that. If something happens that's not fair (and sometime or other, something always will), you don't have to like it, but don't lose your temper. "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference."

Chillin'

what's up wit' it beat
this yo' boy big wayne
comin' from max security
what's goin' on
me i just been chillin'
tryin'a stay out of trouble
until next week
peace

-Big Wayne

From The Beat: They say if you're not making progress, you're backsliding. It's important to stay chill but not give up trying.

To The Next In This Room

Try not to stress in here.
Do your time.
Hit push-ups, read books,
write letters, and sleep.
That's what I do.
I'm eighteen in here
but I should be gone in November.
I'm through with this.

-Lil' Anthony

From The Beat: Almost everybody, alas, says he's through with this. It's not that we don't believe you; we believe that's what you want. The question is: how will you make it come true. What do you plan to do and what do you plan not to do?

Much Love Homies

What it do Beat Within! I'd first like to send my utmost respect to you and yours, and hope this little somewhat of a letter finds you guys all doing the best mentally and physically. I would also like to send the same to everyone doin' their time, reading this lil' message.

But this also goes out to certain individuals incarcerated here that I go way back with. I'm over here in 150 JH locked up too, doin' the thug thizzle, waitin' to go home and parlay at the park like old times, que no?

But I just want to tell ya both to keep your heads up. I know it can get hard on a man looking at all that time, but you gonna sav' it out, feel me? What I'm saying is, do a good program, keep your spirits up and your mind strong. It won't be long till you walkin' around wit' that big smile on your face, tryin' a get into somethin' good. Feel me? We gonna be kickin' it on your home pass!

So keep doin' the best ya can, 'cause that's all ya know how to do, and everything gonna be all gravy. Much love to ya.

-Lil' Ant

From The Beat: Yes, it's important to keep your spirits up and your mind strong, but that's only half of the battle. If you just keep on keeping on by thinking and doing the same old things that got you to locked down, then it's just a waste of time waiting for your release — 'cause your destiny is sealed. Or you can take fate in your hands and start contemplating on a better plan. It'll never be the way it used to be; go back to that, you won't be free.

Door To The Positive World

Next time, when I get out, I'm gon' straight to school, and I'm gon' try to find a job. I will be home on time, follow my parents' words in everything that they say.

Staying away from police is one of the things I should do. Being home more is one of the ways to do it. I guess that'll keep me away from trouble. When I get home, I'm gonna have a beer and a Newport ready! I miss my whole family so much! I can't wait till I get home!

-Homesick

From The Beat: Your heart's in the right place, but nobody's perfect. So when you slip, just get a grip and put yourself back on that positive tip (and don't let drugs and alcohol undermine it).

To The Next Detainee In My Room

Man, you know you just messing up yo' life by coming in here and wasting all this time. You could be on the outs with yo' family and yo' friends.

Just remember while you in here, if you got a girlfriend, she could be on the outside with yo' best friend while she on the phone lying to you! She tell you she just be at home but then she out running around in the streets. Forget everybody else! If you got a child out there and you in here, you can't do nothing for your baby or its mama. You can't provide for your girl/wife.

-Jose

From The Beat: It's not like people think they're choosing to be locked up, but they don't realize that when they choose to put their freedom at risk by what they do, no matter how many times they get away with it, sooner or later they'll be locked up paying their dues. It's dues or — don't! Don't risk your freedom chasing fast money or trying to fit in with fast friends. Just don't.

The Next Oprah

If I had a talk show, I would interview ex-convicts and people that have done twenty-five years and are out of jail and that are trying to get their lives together.

I know there are thousands of videos and television shows out there that could help, but the young adults hearing that good advice don't even want to listen. But I will still try to reach them anyway, 'cause it's still people acting as if criminals ain't even people.

-Jose

From The Beat: Yeah, so many young thugs want to see themselves as beasts or animals, acting as if they don't have the feelings or responsibilities other people do. But it just reinforces the society's less than humane desire to treat them like animals, lock them up and throw away the key. Props for wanting to help.

Mackey

If I had my own talk show, it would only be about life on the block and how real ninjas that really be from the street live life, how we live on a day-to-day basis. Also how to survive where I'm from.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: What helped you survive yesterday, has you locked away today. The real key to survival is learning as you go. Changing your ways as you grow older and wiser is — a survivor!

You Know Why I'm Talking

Born by gangstas,
raised by OG's,
raised around people that bang,
you know why I'm talking.
In some hoods I'm a dead man walking.
That's why I'm cautious and I watch my back.
People drive by and get bucked by straps.

-Junior

From The Beat: The life you describe in this little rhyme doesn't sound like much of a life at all. How did you end up in this position — Dead Man Walking? Do you remember when it started? Do you think this is your future? We know you're cautious, but we still had to cut out a bunch of this poem because the things you were talking about were just too damn dangerous!

Homer

go to work
and he be
going to the corner
to drink.

-Denzell

From The Beat: It's funny unless it's your own dad.

Straight To A Positive Life

When I get out, I want to finish school and get my life together. I'm going to quit drugs and go straight to a positive life.

-Daniel

From The Beat: Good plan. Now be that young man!

The Door, The Life

It's good to be positive. But when there are bad people all around you, it'll make you do bad things to people, like not care if you take from them. And it makes it harder to listen to people who give you good advice. But that's life, and you got to deal with it.

-Wanting to do good

From The Beat: You've got to change your playgrounds, playmates and playthings, if you want to see what good tomorrow can bring. Or hang with the same friends and see how bad it ends.

Legit Way

When we get out, we going to shine even harder than when we was on the out before. We going to shine so hard that the cops really going to have a reason to watch us.

-Lil' Tie

From The Beat: If you quit and go legit, what you write might really come true — except that the police would have no reason to watch you. You could have your money and your freedom, too. Still, as long as you're writing "we" (for you and your boys), you're not thinking for yourself. Stop, think — show them the way.

R-I-P Armon Dante Green

He was one of the greatest!
A lot of people looked up to him!
He was a role model to many.
He was a great athlete.

But he got caught up in the wrong crowd!
If he only listened, just like some of the rest of us should have.

-Larry

From The Beat: So few have the opportunities offered a great athlete. What a terrible waste. No one in that crowd was really his friend, 'cause no friend would lead him in that wrong direction.

Tha Town

man this lil twone
the town go dumb out here
so man come out here
fast bra

-Lil' Twone

From The Beat: You gonna write "come out here" when you're still locked in here? Think about how and why, then go smart outside.

Should've Been Smarter!

Q-vo Beat and Beat readers! This is Lil' Moco from Hayward. I'm in here (the Hall) for my second time. The first time I came to the Hall, I was in the max unit from May to November of 2005.

I got sent to ROP for eight months. Then on July 15, 2006, I got my first home pass! So then I figured that since I been away from my family and hood for over a year, that was enough time! So when it was time to go back to ROP, I just said, "Forget it." And I never went back.

So I was on the run for two months. Then about a week ago, on the eleventh of September, after the Raiders and Chargers game, I thought that I was all grown — so I went to this bar with another homeboy and was soakin' and dancin' wit' all the gurlies. Then out the cuts, a big ol' fight broke out! Well, basically, I'm here in this messed-up place again.

So I just want to say to those at Camp, "Don't run! Just pimp that program!" And to those in max, stay strong and use this time to work with your mind. One love.

-Lil' Moco

From The Beat: Yes, you should've been smarter, but maybe it's the "er" part that keeps bringing you down. 'Cause you always trying to figure how to get over on the law or the system or whatever, when the smart thing would really be not to think like that at all. For example, when you tell someone to pimp their program, it basically means, get through it so you can go back to the same old trash that got you locked up. Don't just pimp it, truly use the time to work with your mind and start thinking straight before it really is too late.

To The Next Detainee In My Room: READ

This is room nine in this unit, and this had been my old room.
This room is boring and it gets cold in the middle of the night.
In the morning if the staff turns on the heater the room will start smelling burned.
If you have time, get yourself a big book so you could kill time by reading.

-Kv

From The Beat: Good advice. What's the book that you've been reading, and how is it?

Pit of Despair

What's up Beat. Well I went to court today and they told me to come back tomorrow.

I hope they let me go home. I got loved ones that care for me and I am just wasting my life in this pit of despair. I been in and out of jail, they sent me at the age of nine and that's a damn shame.

I got a lil' brother looking up to me and if he sees me doing shhh then he's going to think it's OK for him to do it too.

-Lil' Trail

From The Beat: That's deep – here you are barely a man yourself and yet you've got this young boy who sees you as the man in his life. That's a lot of pressure, but it also might give you the push you need to turn your life around. If you decided you wanted to save both him and you from the Pit of Despair, how would you do it?

You Are My Moonlight

i love to love you every night
all under the moonlight
you're so sexy
i love having you in sight
i love looking in yo' pretty brown eyes
all i'm asking is please
please baby don't tell me lies
i need you
you know our love is true
it's TI Baby
waiting for you to come through

-TI Baby

From The Beat: For love truly to go right, you also have to change the way you're living your life. For her sake and your own, find a legal way to get your pay and make a home.

Mom, Stop Cryin'

I want to get out of here but the more you think about it seems like been here for ever I want to show my family that I can change and I'm sorry for all the bad stuff I done in my life. And I'm sorry for making my mom cry every night when I'm not at home. And it's going to be hard for me to stop.

-Kid

From The Beat: Change is hard, you're right. You have to want it deep in your heart. Keep talking honestly about how hard it is, and you'll find the strength.

Court

I went to court on the 18th of September '06 for disposition. The judge said he gave me one more chance at a weak ass group home. Hopefully I don't run, because I need to do my program, not for myself but for my mom, 'cause she been stressin' the most out of my whole family, so it's up to me now to do my program and not run and cause I got two little sisters at the house and I need to be a good example in their life.

-Lil' Vee

From The Beat: The only thing that worries us about this piece is when you say "not for myself but for my mom." Of course you have strong responsibilities, and it's good to see how you think about your mother and sisters, but it always has to start with self-love. Do you love yourself? Do you have big dreams, goals? Most importantly, do you believe in yourself, and in your own strength?

California Livin'

That California livin' is cool, but it gets hard at times. People be struggling everyday. People live a full life, but some die at an early age, for example: fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, or younger than that!

If you really think about it for a minute, what does that tell you? What that tells me is that we don't care about ourselves. But who can? Only our family and friends care about us — not the government. They build more jails and prisons than they do new schools!

But anyway, California life: It's a way of life and how you think and act. To me, I have to live my life to the fullest until I die. Sometimes I say, "Smile now, die later" — because you don't know when the angel of death will get you. So just smile for now. Until next time.

-Fairlas

From The Beat: We're all for smiling, but not if it's the first part of a bargain that has you volunteering to join the list of those who "die at an early age", as you put it — and not if it means you're trading a season of freedom for a lifetime of incarceration either (or a lifetime of trading a season of freedom over and over again for repeated sentences of years on end). Otherwise, it's just as you say, you don't care about yourself enough to put in the work to smile now and later, too! What's more, your friends only think they care about you if they pull you back into living life like a Cali foo', doing what you know will in the end destroy you! Not knowing when the angel of death will come, is not the same thing as setting yourself up as a target for a loaded gun! You feel? The only one who can really take care of you — is you — by what you choose to do and not to do.

Good News

Man, they just had me in max unit for a pistol case, but when I went to court they gave me six months in a group home. Instead of the Y or ROP. So they sent me to this unit so that's better than what I was facin', 'cause at first they was talkin' 'bout seven years and eight months, so you know I pimped camp. Now I gotta pimp this group home. I tried to get back to camp, but the DA was hatin'. But I ain't trippin'.

You ninjas, just stay solid and keep your heads up, and just know that you will be out some day in life again.

-Byron

From The Beat: Congratulations Byron, we have been amazed by how much and how well you write, and we know you've got a big set of challenges coming up, on lockdown and afterwards. If you need help finding programs to get you where you need to go, let us know.

To My Baby Girls: All I Ever Need

All I ever need
is you to kiss away the tears and wipe away my fireworks.
All I ever need
is your love to help me through lonely nights
and to make me smile after a long day.
All I ever need
is to hear you whisper softly "I love you baby"
When I wake in the morning and before I fall asleep
at night to make my life complete.
I wish that for just one moment you could be me,
just so you could know how much I love you baby.
But most of all I want you to always remember
that you can trust me with your love.
And I want you to know that the more of you are smiling,
with the wish to give nothing but good things back to you baby.

-Darnell

From The Beat: Not bad, as far as an all-purpose Valentine goes, but we have to ask: Is there one girl you count on more than all the others? And you trust her? Are you true to her, and is she true to you? One true love is better than a thousand fake ones. Or so we've heard.

This History Lesson

They are a group that some call "the mobb" and others call "the Asian mafia". However, they call themselves "the family". Some people up here at Camp Sweeney, call them "Hopsing" — and in prison they're known as "Tong". So that makes their full name: "Hopsing Tong".

They have "family" in San Jose, San Leandro, Alameda, San Francisco, Oakland, Sacramento, Fairfield — mostly West Coast and countries in Asia. They're not really about banging but more about their money, though they do both bang and slang. Their "family" or "mobb" is big. They have a lot of people, money, drugs, cars; and they have where houses.

Just letting y'all know a little history of the Hopsing Tong. It's not just Chinese but also has Mien, Vietnamese, Cambodian, and even Blacks. And they're just multiplying.

-Mien Boi

From The Beat: Thanks for the history lesson. We'd really only heard about Mien, Vietnamese, Cambodian and Thai, for example, funking with each other in rival gangs. We've heard, of course, of the Tong societies that started in San Francisco's Chinatown over a century ago, but didn't know they'd spread to other Asian peoples (here) and countries (there). The saddest part of this piece, though, on a personal level, is that you seem to be so impressed with their money and power that you accept their exploitation of their own peoples as well as others (in the drug trade, not to mention forced prostitution). We all know that knowledge is power, and you've increased our knowledge — but you're still deluding yourself unless you admit your knowledge of the dark side of all this, and not just victimizing others, but the terrible consequences that visit its, what shall we call them, soldiers? Camp is your chance to be both alive and free when you're older, 'cause if you don't change, the next level will bring more pain. Of course, you can thug it out, but what do you gain?

Going To A Group Home

Man, Beat this Lil' T again trying to do something with my life and pimp the system 'cause, I talked to my PO yesterday and she said if I run I'm going to CYA and that's where I don't want to go 'cause that's the place to be since I'm going to a group home they're givin' me a chance 'cause they could have sent me to the Y but they showed me some love so this is my last time in here. I mean it. I'm gonna go to this placement and man up and handle my business.

-Lil' T

From The Beat: We hope the next time we see you it's walking as a free man on the city streets. Be safe out there, and keep your eyes on freedom.

What I Did In Juvenile Hall

Imagine being in your room for mostly all the day. All you can do is read and probably listen to your radio. All you got in the room is a bed your clothes and your book and some blankets and a pillow. It's been alright for me being in my room. I get bored quick so all I do all day is read a book to keep me quipped!

-Lil' Mike

From The Beat: Reading is a great way to pass the time. Tell The Beat about what you've been reading and how it keeps your brain in motion.

Feeling . . .

Man I feel bad for my family who fight, suffer sadness and also who work so damn hard to pay the bills, food, lifestyle, but whatever life doesn't mean to be perfect. When I get out I will maybe go back to my homies but yeah I will get a job and live by myself. It also gonna be hard too.

-A Boy

From The Beat: True, it's gonna be hard. But not as hard as living the rest of your life in jail. So get the hard stuff over with now - don't postpone it!

What You Can Do to Prepare

What you can do to prepare yourself for the next stage in life is when you get out don't mess up or get yourself in any trouble. I really didn't get any help from any of my teachers. When I got to my room I just read a book.

-Lil' Mike

From The Beat: Tell us more about school and what kind of help you wish you could get from your teachers. Thanks for writing.

SANTA CRUZ

What I'd Like To Forget

What I would like to forget is that I am here and that I've messed up in my life. I just want to forget everything and start all over again.

-Rene'

From The Beat: Alas, the past can never be undone. But a better future can be made. But it has to be made in the present. Every day, every hour, the life you'd rather lead can be led. The future is one day after another. The better your behavior right now, the brighter that future will be.

The Future

In my immediate future there is nothing to do but sleep and hear music. Kindness is what I will give for the rest of my years. I put ice on my tongue and it makes me laugh.

-Rene'

From The Beat: OK, very cool. And don't forget to be kind to yourself.

I Will Try . . .

I have been locked up out of county, and now I am back in Santa Cruz County. I'm going to go live with my grandmother for a year. I'm going to try to stay off drugs and stay clean. I'm going to try to get back on track and graduate from school. I will try to live a good life.

-Juan

From The Beat: It's great that you'll be able to spend time with your grandmother. Grandmothers are often wise, and they love their grandchildren very much. You would be wise to seek and accept some expert help with your drug problem. Our best wishes to you and your grandmother.

I'm going to try to stay off drugs and stay clean. I'm going to try to get back on track and graduate from school.

My Mistake

I whistled at the girl but she was only a ghost.
I turned my engine off and opened the door.
The rain struck me hard and a question ran through my mind.
There was a screech and all of a sudden, a blue light.
I had stopped my car in the middle of the road.

-Edgar

From The Beat: This is a very cool poem. When we read it, we're there with you, every step of the way. It's almost like the old twilight zone tv show. This is eerie, interesting, and well done. Thanks Edgar. Love to see more.

Leaving Soon

I'm leaving to go to a group home for six months. I'm going to try to complete it so I can go home with a clean slate. If I don't, then I go out of county, like Sacramento or Fresno. I want to stay in Santa Cruz. I hate this place. I hate you. And I hate me.

-Kyle

From The Beat: We'll write this one off to 'having a bad day' and catch you on the rebound. For the record, we like you. We hope you get your wish.

WALDEN HOUSE PSK

This is weird because I'm thinking of two people and I don't even really know if it's going to be able to work out.

Weird Feelings

I'm in love. I can't have the one I truly love, but yet I'm falling for someone else. This is weird because I'm thinking of two people and I don't even really know if it's going to be able to work out.

I want to be able to love again, and her have me be the one girl she loves back. But I don't know.

This feeling I have, it's drivin' me crazy. I'm crazy in love. I really just want her so bad. At the same time, I'm falling for other girl, and I'm going weird about dudes

I just have a very weird life!

-Dolores

From The Beat: We don't find love all that weird. It's something that almost everyone feels — both its highs and its lows. But the fact that you think you love one person while you also have feelings for another tells us that you should take it slowly. Maybe what you're feeling is not quite love, but a combination of emotions that are made that much sharper by being locked up.

The Next Oprah? Hah!

If I had in my own talk show, it wouldn't be on for long...Times is hard and I can't air show stuff all day or something.

It would be about hard knock stuff, true to life, exclusively live type shhh! How people live in the 'jects, the grimy 'hood... show what's really, really...

Take them to the halls and interview little cats...Go to the streets and talk to hustlers and dope fiends...What's their inside life? Mess with the police... see what they 'bout, 'cept it ain't censored.

-Crackhead The Glory

From The Beat: We're not sure you could get a show on TV that gave an uncensored view into your lives or the lives of cops. (Have you ever seen "Reno 911" on TV? It's not real, but it is hilarious...) But anyway, we'd like to see this show come true.

The Door To A Positive Life

I have been locked up a couple of times... can't ya tell Beat? Well, it finally took a group home to keep me from staying outta juvy... Yo, dis time I'm not playin'... Juvy ain't for me... See you guys at 850! Nah... I want the good life... I can be a wife and get a job and stuff, right?

-Crackhead's Confused

From The Beat: We think you can be whatever you choose to be if you're truly dedicated to that. How many times did you go to juvenile hall before you realized it isn't for you? What's the most important thing or things you have to do to keep your promise of never coming back?

The Next Detainee In My Room

Dear Sucka that's in my room I peed all over the floor 'cause staff wouldn't let me out. I wrote on the walls and had to clean it up. All the bumpy marks I did from goin' crazy with court.

Yo' my advice to you... Stay out 'cause in here ain't sweet... You don't wanna keep goin' into used nasty rooms at the halls. You don't wanna have to knock on the door just to pee. And I know you sho ain't feelin' waitin' time to pass for court...

-Crackhead The Original

From The Beat: So, what part of this advice are you taking for yourself? Besides having to clean up your messes, were there any other consequences for the things you did in (and to) your room?

In The Memory Of The Trade Center

I feel so sorry about the families and people who lost their lives. If I was in one of those planes, I would've saved those people in the plane and the tower. When I heard about what happened I was devastated. I cried for five days straight. So on 9/11 in 2001 I stayed in for those who died in the Twin Towers. So for five years I stayed in on 9/11 for the anniversary and remember the people that lost their lives that day. I feel so sorry and may God be with them.

-Big M B1

From The Beat: What happened to all those innocent people in the planes, the Twin Towers, the Pentagon and in Pennsylvania is so sad and tragic, you're right. If you had been on one of those planes that was hijacked, what would you have done to help stop the crashes? Do you see any connections between the killings these people succeeded in bringing about and the daily killings we read about in these pages and in the newspaper? How do you think the "War on Terror" will end?

Locked Up

I hate being locked up. People think that this make them tough or that they earnin' stripes. But whoever told you that was telling you lies. I hate being told what to do, especially when it's the same shhh every day.

Even if it was different, I don't like being told what to do anyway. I hate my PO telling me lies, my public defender waving time because time don't fly. If you heard that you heard another lie.

I hate wearing the clothes somebody else wore the day before. When I walk outta here, I won't look back, but chances are I will come back. But this is something nobody should want to or even be comfortable with. Oh yeah, for those who know w'at's up. A'right then, late.

-Yung Bird B4

From The Beat: If hating this place as much as you do isn't enough to keep you out, what would? You say that you probably will come back (a tragic prediction), so we want to know what it would take for you not to come back? Is there anything you can do to avoid this place in the future? Is there anything we can do? Is there anything anyone can do?

Better Things To Do

W'at's up my fans and homies? It's your boy J-Stub. They still got me in this disgusting place. It's good 'cause Stub gone get home one day for my young homies that keep sayin' they lookin'. Y'all need to get it an' step your game up

Your boy Stub got that now. I got a lot of shhh going for me. On my way to have a baby an' a wife and that's all I need in life. Y'all will never see me again. I am gone. Me and my wife, we got better things to do with our life.

-J-Stubba B4

From The Beat: We get mixed messages in this piece, J-Stub. We love how you ended it, because you definitely have better things to do than spend any more time locked up. But when you say you're waiting to get back to your homies who are looking to you for guidance, we hope that you teach them the same message because they ALL have better things to do with their lives.

Next Dude In My Room

You know me, it's big D

Hallway 3, B2 unit, listen to me

We got staff talkin' shhh, but don't mind that man

But peep the game

Hollering shhh off of you screen go change the frame

I'll tell you how it is, just remain the same

Read a couple books, so yo' time'll fly

Take a nap and hit yo' push-ups to pass the time

Listen to the counselors and not talk on the light switch

-Dre B2

From The Beat: Good advice, Dre. Do you always follow it yourself? If you had such a letter waiting for you, would it have helped you navigate the hall better?

The Next Oprah

If I had an Oprah show, I would talk about thug out stuff. I would tell people that I am a real thug. That there isn't one way to be a thug. And how to be a thug. Just don't get caught.

-Orlando B1

From The Beat: We're not very encouraged by your talk show, Orlando. Tell us, how would you get your audience to believe that there's a way to be a thug and not get caught when you're a perfect example of the opposite? What do you think would happen to you and your guests if you started boasting on your thug ways? We know there is no such thing as "just don't get caught," but for the same of an interesting brain puzzle, can you explain to us (the audience) why it's all right to be a thug even if you don't get caught.

Yo

Yo I'ma be gone in a minute

Free as I can be

But the freedom that I seek

Ain't really what I see

In a groupy

No! that's not where I need to be

Where I need to be baby

Is back in them streets

Not to smoke or to hustle

Don't mistake it... I like to eat

But I need to bounce back

'Cause the streets is missing me

But the only thing I miss

Is the homies

That feel to feet

Rest in Peace

-JR F Baby B2

From The Beat: So, your mind is on the block even though you claim you don't want to hustle or smoke... Come on JR. We don't buy it. Oh, we think you think you can go back to all that without falling back into old habits, but we know far too many boys who have gone down that path to believe it is possible. All we can tell you is that we hope you spend some time thinking of other possibilities, like going to school, staying drug and alcohol free, avoiding the old places where you used to get into trouble. We don't think you're listening to us, so we don't think you'll follow our advice. And that's a shame, because where your head is will soon lead you back to where your body is...

Thug Show

If I had my own talk show, the topics I would talk about is out-of-control thugs. And I would like to have Lil' Wayne on my show for a guest. I would have one of my ninjas to host with me. I would want my audience to know that smoking weed is not a crime know matter what nobody say.

-Smoke B4

From The Beat: Well, if you advised your audience that "smoking weed is not a crime," you would be lying to them. As much as you think it should not be, it still IS a crime, and there are people all over the country sitting in prison because of it. What else would you advice your audience?

The Door To A Positive Life

When I get out I'm going to have a positive life. I'm not going to hang out with the same group of kids. I'm going to do the right thing and stop doin' w'at I do, 'cause I don't need to. It's better ways to get money, like getting a job and going to college. That's the key of life now, 'cause jail is made for me and you.

-Patrick B1

From The Beat: What made you change your attitude, Patrick, and to want to make your money in the legit world? We absolutely agree with you that going to college is the key to your future. What are you going to do when old friends approach you and want you to do things that you know can lead you right back here (whether it's getting drunk or stoned or doing a lick)? What kind of work do you see yourself doing? What are the possibilities for you to get that job you want? Great luck in achieving your dream!

Next time

If I were to write a letter to the next person in my room I will say "Ha ha ha, you got caught! Next time think before you do."

-Jokes B4

From The Beat: Kind of nasty, aren't you Jokes? We sure hope a letter like this isn't on your pillow if you are unfortunate enough to get out and come back to this place. Or, are you just trying to live up to your nickname?

Going Back To School

I pray to God that I get out on the 28th. I got faith that I'm getting out, and when I get out, I'm going to stay out 'cause I ain't trying to go to YA. You know I'm just trying to do what I was doing, and that was going to school like I was. And I'm going to just do what I got to do.

-Man Man B4

From The Beat: Nobody is "trying to go to YA," and we sure hope that you don't go there. Going to school is an excellent plan to move your life forward, but we're not why you ended up here if that's all you were doing. Don't risk coming back!

To My Wife

It's your man J-Stubba F Baby, and we not together right now but its good 'cause we gone see better days now that we together. I been seeing bigger things in life now we on our way to do things that we been waiting for in life. We got people hatin' like we stars. They mad 'cause they can't get what you got. But they can't get to us 'cause we gone make it no matter what. You can hate it or love it, Stub and Talia on top.

-J-Stubba F. Baby B4

From The Beat: Well, we're glad that you have someone to love and who loves you, but don't think that love is all you need to get through life. No doubt, it's harder without that love, but all relationships are filled both with joy and with stress, so we hope you develop all your skills and advance your knowledge (go to school!), so that both of you can succeed together.

Home In Peace

Damn! People say they your homie, but when you get locked up it's a different story. Look, there's only one person that I respect these days, an' that's my brother, an' I ain't going to say his name. I know that he would die for me in so many ways, so look out bra, I love you no matter what you say.

Damn! I think about you every day, when you're gonna come home, bra, an' be with your family in peace? For we can be in a car too-deep getting females an' being in a place where you wanna be. But say up bra, and we're going to be home in peace.

-Lil' Rider B1

From The Beat: How will you and your brother hold onto your freedom when you get it? What do you plan to stop doing in order to stop coming to this place? Or, are you one of those not-yet-mature young people who thinks he can get away with the same behavior without facing the same consequences? We hope not, because we know too many of them who are right back where they started...

God Is With Me

I know God is with me so I'm going to follow His path that He got for me when I get out this time. That's why I got to do what I got to do, like be around the right people like some of my family and my girl.

Do you believe in God? I do. That's why I pray two times a day. I have faith. Do you? I need God in my life. That's why I pray and it do work if you have faith in God. I know He goin' let me out and I ain't looking back.

-Man Man B4

From The Beat: It is good that you are comforted by the knowledge that God is with you. Now, you have to show God that you are with Him.

A Door To A Positive Life

I will one day open a door and see nothing but light. It will be me and both of my brothers, Marcus Law, aka Nitro, and Javon King, aka Waga. We will be somewhere else, in another world where we could just spend all the time in the world together. We will just do the right things, like get girls together, even get jobs, do better than what we was taught in tha 'hood, aka the Ject.

Ain't it cold when you're on earth? No one gives a shhh about you, but when you die, people has millions of stories to say about you on your funeral. But in a couple of weeks or months, people forget you. But that's not in my vocabulary. I love both of y'all and miss y'all like shhh!

I wish I could see y'all, but until we meet again, I love the hell out of my bros. Rest in peace and I'll never forget y'all. Just hold your head up high and save my place.

-Freddy B4

From The Beat: Life on earth does seem cold at times with nobody caring about anybody else. But nobody knows what lies beyond this life, so we urge you to think about those things you see yourself doing in the next life ("the right things") and try to move your life in that direction now, before you discover what lies beyond. We don't know what Nitro or Waga would tell you if they could come back for five minutes, but we're willing to bet that they would rather be alive than dead, and that they would rather for you to live than to die. We don't want you to rest in peace, we want you to live in peace. Is that possible?

Chased And Caught

Parked in the projects smokin' weed in a van with some other girls and boys, a dope addict came and asked if I wanted to use his car for a ten shot. I took the car for a spin still smoking with homies. Ended up chased by the 5-0 to get away. It was a chase. I got caught. Now I'm here again.

-Fat Thug B5

From The Beat: When will you stop doing things that you can get caught for? It looks like to us that you are the one they catch, so why put yourself in that position. We hope Fat Thug doesn't end up in a place where there's nothing but other (male) thugs to socialize with, feel us?

My PO Don't Listen

My PO trying to play me, like he think I'm stupid. But really he got me messed up because he don't like to listen to what I got to say. He trying to send me to some long-term group home, but I think that he should give the chance to go live with my dad. He think that I'm goin to run amok, but how he goin to judge me and not give me a chance? Oh my God, man, I tired of getting played up in this hell.

Man, for everybody, I'm letting you know that you shouldn't come to jail! 'Cause wit my private pretender, he be also trying to play me too. Man shhh.

-Jeannie M GU

From the Beat: So, your private attorney is playing you, your PO is playing you — everybody's playing you except you! How does that work, exactly? Did you already get any second chances? Did you use them for what they were intended, or did you just go back to old ways that lead to jail? We don't know your PO or your attorney, but we know enough of personal responsibility to see that it is entirely missing from your writing. Maybe that's what they're looking for in you and not finding... If you don't want to get played again, think about what you are going to do once you get out.

If I was to be the next
Oprah, I would have my
TV show all about the
streets of the Bay Area.

They Think They Know Me

What make you think my life better than yours?

My name Fashion Ted.

Some know me from the Six Figgas

Some know me as T-Tone

Most know me as that ninja

Who blind your eyes if you look at my chain too hard

Most know me as that ninja

Who will pass you up every day in a new car with nice-ass rims

Some day in your life you would like to drive

Most know me as that ninja

Who take one step out my car

Look how many punks rush me

Most know me as the show's number one boy

Most think they know me

Most say I'm they ninja

When some one ask them do they know me

But some will know they lying like hell

Most hate me for what I do

Most want to rob me for everything in my pickets

Most want to be around me to just have that shine I have

Most think just 'cause what I have, what I ride,

They think my life better than theirs

-Antonio B5

From The Beat: Do you think your life is better than theirs? It sounds like you do. It sounds like you're very proud of the reputation you've built for yourself. But let's examine a little reality while we're at it. If being locked up with a bunch of boys under the control of a bunch of strangers is your idea of having "that shine," then we don't want to shine! We don't think you should be so concerned about what people think of you, and more concerned about what you think of yourself. Do you like it here? Do you think you will like what the system has ready for you beyond here? If the answer to those questions is yes, then just keep developing that reputation that means so much to you. (It won't count for shhh in YA or the pen.) But if you value the most important gifts a human being can be given — life and freedom — then you'd better start cultivating a brand new reputation. By living in a brand new way!

Many Days Left

Since July 1st days left on probation been counting down December 27, 2006, is when I come back around

Fresh off probation is how I'm going to keep it 99... 98... 97... peep this

Lil' Shadow is going to get his cash for a minute

That's what they all say, it's the truth isn't it

I got family in San Juan and family in The City

Ya feel me, I'm from the birthplace of San Quinn

Hittin' house parties and Quinces

Latinas makin' it rompe, what he say

But right now it's nothin' but four walls

And when you're locked up you only got your word and your calls I'm supposed to get out really soon

Yeah, right, I know my PO playing with my emotions and that ain't cool

I'm the youngest in the unit with one of the

shortest tempers

And when I got into a rage, I send full flown

embers

I'm that Black and Latin satin.

Suckas act all hard but when hit with time they

scream

When I get time I do nothing but laugh and smile

The real crazy in me came back, so this boy going

to stay here awhile.

-Lil Shadow B4

From The Beat: Is there a connection between your youngest age and what you call your full-blown rage? Is laughter when locked what you're really feeling, or are there emotions that you are not revealing? The "demon boy" that has to stay, should learn a different way to play. Growing up is hard to do, but we hope it happens soon for you.

Who Ain't Tired?

What's really going with The Beat Within? This DeAries... no nickname given, reppin' two thumbs up, fresh out of CYA. And hell yeah, I'm tired of being locked up. Who ain't tired of being locked up?

-DeAries B5

From The Beat: We don't know anybody who's locked up who isn't tired of it. But the question is, just how tired of it are you? Tired enough to make some basic changes in your life so you can get used to freedom for a while? Even if that's not on the agenda for a minute, we hope you're preparing yourself now for when you walk into the sunshine.

The Next Oprah

If I was to be the next Oprah, I would have my TV show all about the streets of the Bay Area. It would be like that Mac Dre DVD Treal TV, and it would be like 'hood to 'hood. I would have hella of my patnas I know from everywhere just having fun. Then I would have hella Bay Area rappers on there, and I would just go city to city and bounce out, record a few people, let them talk and go to the next city. But I would have my studio the place where I grew up at.

-J-Biggs B4

From The Beat: Sounds like a show that a lot of people would watch. Who would you look to sponsor your TV show?

The Right Key

Young Enano chilling another week up in this facility, sleepin' in a cell behind a door I can't open. I didn't choose the right key. I been messing with all of the wrong keys that been letting me into a room but taking the key from me. So I can't open it. So I advise you to find the right key for you can open the door to freedom.

-Enano B4

From The Beat: Recognizing the wrong keys is a place to start looking for the right ones. Are you searching for those keys that, while they can't open the door you're behind now, can keep you from re-entering that locked room? What do you think they might be? Where do you think they might be found?

It's Cold But I'm Hot

It's cold but I'm hot
the veins in my face is poppin' out like rocks
The beat in my heart is poundin' with rain drops

It's cold but I'm hot
The pain in my heart just dropped
It's rough so rough
Makes me feel like I just missed da bus
Forget dis shhh I'm done

I hope you like it 'cause I just had fun!

-Kim M-Baby GU

From The Beat: We're all for having fun, Kim, but what we really look for in these pages is some serious attempts to give us the benefit of your knowledge, your experience and your wisdom. Use The Beat to teach as well as to have fun!

Turning 16

Well, today I'm feeling all right, you feel me, 'cause I'm still in here. But it's okay 'cause I'm still getting visits from my grandma aka mama. But my birthday on Saturday. I'm turning 16 years old. My next court date on the 13th and I hope I get out next Wednesday. But yeah, that all I got to say.

What gone be different when I get out here is go to school, get a job, be a leader not a follower, and stick with my family and go with my first mind.

-Lene GU

From the Beat: Happy 16th Birthday Lene. One year older, how do you feel? Are you grown up yet? How are you going to keep these promises? If you didn't go to school before, why do you think you will this time? The most important person to follow is yourself — and that means you're going to have to use the word "No" a lot. Are you up to it?

The Door To A Positive Life

If I could make up for what I did and go back, I would start back school and start back playin' football and trying to be somebody in life. But chu always got to have a back up plan for what chu do.

-D-Boy

From The Beat: What do you mean if you could make up for what you did and go back... why can't you? You may not be able to change the past, but you certainly can change your future by following your own good advice: Go back to school! Play ball! Don't quit! Think about your long-term future!

The Door To A Positive Life

What's really good with The Beat? Me, good. I just come from court yesterday and they told me that I'm going to Samoa, but just for a year. But I'm gon do what I have to do so I could stay out of the halls. My PO giving me a good deal. If I go out there and do what I have to do then I could come back off probation, ya feel me.

But yeah, I'm gon do what I have to do and stay out of trouble and come back to my loved one, ya feel me, so he don't have to worry about shhh because I'm gon come back. so he don't have to worry.

But I'm gon miss The Beat. But anyways I gotta go, so I get back to The Beat until the next we meet.

For everybody locked up, keep yo' head up because me and my boy at the top and can't nobody bring us down. Keep yo' head up and don't come back.

-Ireen GU

From the Beat: The Beat will miss your too Ireen. You can still write to us wherever you are. That is what the Beat Without section is all about. So don't forget about us and pick up that pen/pencil and write us. But even more important, don't forget what it was like being locked up so you're not tempted to do the kinds of dirt that got you here to begin with, because as sure as the night follows the day, if you repeat your behavior of the past you can count on more of the same punishment for the future. Do what you need to do in Samoa, and give us a heads up.

I Am

I am:

Beautiful, wonderful, aggressive, sensitive, a Libra, lovable, courteous, a lover, respectful, a mother, not a fighter, a boss, considerate, feisty, crazy, sexy, black, a dread head, silly, respected, happy, huggable, kissable — another person in juvenile hall.

-Poohdah GU

From The Beat: Do you mean if we mixed all these ingredients together, we'd get Poohdah! Not a bad combo at all!

Still In Here

Yeah, w'at's up Beat? This yo' girl Rodnika coming from GU girls' unit... and I'm still in here. Wait for another space in the group home. The judge sending me to EUCLID house for 90 days as in three months. Then I can get out and go back home to my granny.

When I get out I plan on getting a job, going back to school and getting into lots of programs and getting my life together. I'm going to try to be a more better person. But my next court date is October 3, 2006 at 9:00 in the morning. But yeah, until the mean time, I'm in here till the end of this month, which is September.

Yeah, I'm still in here. Peace much love

-Rodnika GU

From the Beat: Seems like you have it all planned out as to what you are going to do once you get out. We hope you will stick with your plan! We never want to read another piece from you with those terrible three words: I'm still here!

What Will Open My Door

What will open my door is me not coming back to juvenile. When my door is opened, I will be able to get out and not look back. I was already going to school, but arriving late. But I'm come to school on time. I'ma get my education. I will get a job and be the best I can be.

-Sybreea GU

From The Beat: We admire the goals you've set for yourself, but we know how much easier it is to make those promises when you're locked up than to keep them when you're free. So we hope you don't forget how much you hated juvenile hall. There will be times when you don't want to go to school — when you went to bed too late the night before, when you didn't finish your homework, when you're not getting along with classmates or the teacher — and we hope that when those times come, you just force yourself to stay in school. You may hate it at the time, but it pays off big in the end.

To Everyone Who Comes To The Hall

I'm a young woman in training right now. I'm 17 years old and I'm in the hall, but that's not the point. When I'm one the streets I see girls starting at the age of 12 running around doing drugs, drinking standing on the block kicking it with they so-called friends.

But what we all don't realize is that all that only last for a minute and when it comes down to getting real, no one is willing to stand up. Everyone thinks coming to jail is coo'. You got all the people in there saying they trying to help you, but a lot of them don't care. You just a way to get a better pay check.

All I'm saying is stay young as long as you can and realize the system ain't trying to help you. They want the money!

-Dar-Dar GU

From the Beat: We can't totally disagree or agree with you. We know that there are some that do bring their hearts to work and try their best to help those in need. Then again, like you said, there are those that just come to work for the pay check. The realistic thing to do is this: count on yourself, help yourself, no one can help you unless you help yourself first. Right Dar Dar? What are your plans for after you leave this place? Have you finished high school yet? That would be the place to start, it seems to us.

Ma Son

Man, I'm up in here thinking about some other shhh...

Like ridin' in ma scrap a wit'
ma son on the passenger side,
listening to some rick rock beats.

Yeah, I'm a young mom,
but you feel me, I can't do it big bein' locked up for this long.

It's only been a month, but it feels like years and all I've got through is so many tears.
Every night I pray to God that ma son is okay 'cause I don't want him to end up like ma sis an pass away.

-Rider Mom GU

From The Beat: We hope that once you get out, you will turn your life around so you can be with your son every day and every night — and not provide the example to him that leads to lock up! Being a parent is not an easy thing, especially when you are still a teenager. When you were riding around with your son at your side, were you doing anything you shouldn't have been doing, like smoking weed or drinking? We hope not, because that would tell us that you're not really ready to be a responsible mom yet. Now that you are a mom, you need to put your own desires to the side, stop doing the things that take you away from him, and see his success and future as your responsibility. Your son needs you more than the streets need you. Think about it.

Happy Today

I am so happy, you feel, because today my court date was crackin'. My boyfriend was there, my granny, my cousin, and my auntie. Man, that just made my day.

And another thing, my group home talked to me yesterday and she said they coming to get me on Friday or Monday the latest. But anyway, that's all.

-Lene

From the Beat: Wow, you have a lot of support and it seems like everything is going your way. No wonder you are so happy. Now that you see just how strong your family support is, what do you think you owe them all? How about staying out of the hall? That would be a fair trade... We wish you the best, and hope only the best for you. (Hope we won't see you again... in here.)

Something new

Something new is what I want
And something I feel I need
But what is something new
Without you

They say you need to move on
But never forget and
Always hold on
Is what I do

Yes, there's pain in what I ask for
Still I look for something new
But what is it
Without you

My old life calls my name every day
But I tell myself
What is life
Without new

I don't understand
But one day I will find
Something new

-Meka GU

From the Beat: We hope the "something new" you find is a new way to live your life, one that doesn't include giving up your freedom! It's nice to have someone out there to love, but that's not the most important thing for you to focus on right now. You need to figure out a way that let's you live without risking your health or your freedom. That would be something new!

YGC Not So Bad

People come in and out of YGC all day long, but why is it that people come in this BS? I can see guys, but girls? I thought that girls would be the one to stay out and go to school and stay on they shhh, but I guess not.

Me, I have been in this hole 8-10 times and to me, coming to YGC is not shhh. I'm not saying that I like this, but I don't mind coming to this bs. But I do think that I do need to change my ways and stay the hell out of this place.

But on some real shhh, I hope I get out and stay out of this bs for good. Stay down.

-Fat Rat B2

From The Beat: We're a little confused by this because at first you say that it's not so bad coming here (which you've proved by coming here 8-10 times), but then at the end you say you want out of this place for good! How do you plan to accomplish that goal? In order to stay out, you're going to have to stop doing what you've done 8-10 times, which led you here. Why will this time be any different than all the times that went before? If you know that you need to change, what changes are you planning to make?

Yo Room

Sitting in yo' room, eyes full of tears lookin' back on all these years. Never meant for it to happen that way; never meant to catch that case.

Now you gotta sit in this room waitin' yo' doom or not my doom

Just to sit, sit in my room and think,

think 'bout my wrong doing, the reason that got you in this room.

Might not see yo' mama for a minute, but it's ok

'cause God just might give you a way to make it out yo' room.

You gotta remember they can lock up yo' body but not yo' mind.

Just take yo' time in yo' room 'cause yo' room

just might be the room to save you from yo' doom.

-Slim B2

From The Beat: We're sure you never meant to catch a case, but when you were doing whatever it was that led to this case, did you think you would just get away with it without consequences? Did you think you wouldn't get caught, or if you did that you could talk your way out of it? How can being in your room "save you from yo' doom?" Will it save you?

Alcohol

I don't need alcohol and drugs to make me happy. All I need is my girl and some of my family, like my mom and sister.

-Man Man

From The Beat: Good for you, Man Man. When we look carefully at all the young people locked up, we find that alcohol plays a very big role in many people's downfalls. So, without alcohol to pull you down (and with God to pull you up), we hope this is your last visit to lock-up.

Success Is The Key

The key that I will need is the key called succeed because that's the only key that could open my door and many doors. I think that the key succeed is hard to find because you need to pass through a lot of stuff like jail, drugs, and many different kind of things. You might get stressed out or get depressed but you will pass that test and find the key.

-Lisamar GU

From the Beat: Have you found that key yet Lisamar? You haven't really told us how to find that key, and in some ways the word "key" and the word "success" mean the same thing. Do you think success just comes to those who pass through all the stress and depression, or do you have to take a more active part in your own success? What's your plan?

Love To Live Free

I would love to love a positive life. I would love to love the rest of my life free. But it seems like it's hard. Some ways that I will try to live one this time is to get a job. But I'm gone do my thang for life but be a little more smarter about how I do it and where and when I do it.

I'll probably sign up for a few classes, and calm down. I'm about to turn 18 in juvenile I'm not trying to go to the pen. I'm trying to live a positive life with a lot of money and more kids than my mom and dad put together.

But most of all I'm trying to live my life, and I encourage you readers to love yours like it's golden because you never know when its going to end. Never break under pressure.

-BaDa B4

From The Beat: If you think you can move towards a positive life while still doing your "thang" (no matter how much smarter you do it), you're headed for a fall. You can't live with one foot on the block and the other in a classroom. Abraham Lincoln put it best when he said, "A house divided against itself cannot stand." We encourage you to move forcefully in the direction of school and that positive life you want, and leave your old ways behind you. We know you think you can escape these consequences (and worse) if you're slicker, but we far too many lifers and other long-term prisoners who had the same thought, and realized too late where they went wrong. Don't be one of them.

Talk Show

If I had a talk show I would advise the rising youth of America. I wish to be a social worker or a counselor. But if I had a talk show I would reach any and everyone at the same time efficiently. I feel that our young people are troubled and need the most help because me and they are the future. And it's best to strive for a promising future.

-Nicole GU

From The Beat: Yes, you are right. You and the younger generation are the future, but how are you going to help others when you have helped yourself yet? What advice (specifically) would you give? What advice do you give yourself?

Door To The Positive Life

I am sick and tired of being in jail. I want my freedom once again. When I get out I will not go right back to my old ways.

-Lil' Dee B2

From The Beat: It's good to read that you're not going to go back to your old ways when you get out because your old ways will lead you right back to this place you're sick and tired of. So, what are your plans for when you get out of here?

To The Next Detainee In My Room

I could never know what you like, but if you a gangsta, do yo thang. If you a square, don't act hard 'cause ninjas could tell if you fake or not. Don't go lookin' for you homies 'cause these ninjas ain't 'bout shhh.

No matter what you do, just do you. The reason why I say "just do you" is 'cause you the one doin' yo' time, not yo' homies. They out doin' them and pushin' on wit' dey shhh and still doing the same shhh they always was doin'. Believe me, bra, they ain't trippin'.

-Scotty B5

From The Beat: We think everyone locked up acts a little hard for self-protection. And some of the ones that seem the hardest are the most in fear. But we understand what you mean when you say that only you are doing your time, and not your homies, so you have to figure out a way that makes the time easier for you, and moves your life in a direction that takes out of the halls, and not in a direction that leads right back.

Keys To Unlock That Door

Well, I need a lot of keys. I'm in juvenile hall because I ran away from home and left my life behind. I went away because I had a lot of pain and I couldn't take it no more.

I came to San Francisco with my boyfriend trying to have a better life without arguments. It only lasted three months. Police got me walking in a street where I didn't had to b. They arrested me for some fake stuff like prostitution and lying to the police of my age and running away, but now I'm here stuck.

I had court today and they dropped my charges 'cause they didn't have no proof, so I was released. But my mom didn't want to take me back. It really hurt but I'm still here. I can't do anything but wait.

-Lisamar GU

From The Beat: Your mother will have to come to pick you up. But why doesn't she want you home, and what can you do to mend that relationship? We hope by the time this comes out that you will already be home. It's time for you to be mature enough to face your problems and not just run away from them. That only creates more.

I'll probably sign up for a few classes, and calm down. I'm about to turn 18 in juvenile I'm not trying to go to the pen.

To The Next Detainee In My Room

If I had to write to the next detainee, I will tell him to just come here and do yo' time. Don't try to get in no fights 'cause you can get mo' time like dat. And if you be cool in here you will be out yo' room a lot eating pizza, getting soda from the staff, and everything. All you got to do is be cool and they will buy you stuff, anything you want. So I say if you come in here do yo' shhhh and get out.

-Berty B5

From The Beat: Well, we particularly like that last sentence of advice. Of course it's nice to get pizza and soda when you're locked up, but it's so much nicer not to get locked up so you can get your own pizza and soda! Have you been able to avoid the fights that jump off in here from time to time?

To The Next Detainee In My Room

The next person to come to my room, I would tell them to keep ma shhh clean 'cause I been through ups and downs. I cried in there. I slept in there. I said my prayers in there. Shhh, basically I did everything (feel me). But if you do happen to come across my room, ya betta be coo'. But man, just knock ya time if ya shhhh petty 'cause I'm in here fa some serious shhh. But I'm go ride it out ya heard.

-AL-Bundy B5

From The Beat: Do you ever think about all the boys who occupied your room before you moved in? What do you think are the main differences among them to predict which ones are living in freedom now, and which ones have gone on to even darker holes?

NICKY We first met this young man in our workshops in San Mateo County Juvenile Hall (Hillcrest) and we were blown away by his strength and courage instantly. Nothing has changed since then as he's still a very powerful survivor. Not at all ashamed by his sexual preference, he's openly gay in a place where any hint of that can cause you a tremendous amount of problems. Yet he's courageous enough to not deny who he is even if it means it'll cause him some problems. As far as his poems go, he's a very gifted writer that has only gotten better since the last time we published his stuff. Right now he's writing us as a free man and we appreciate him thinking of us even when not in jail. Thanks...

Does My Father Look Like This?

Is he light skinned,
Or is he brown?

Does he smile, or
Does he frown?

Is my father tall,
Or is he short?

Is he a quitter, or
A good sport?

Does my father look like
A person who would

Leave his 2-month old
Baby for good?

All for another place
What does he look like,
Can you picture his face?

But you're lost,
a stranger amongst strangers
No idea who you are, or why you're here
Just that you're alone, lost in these
everyday faces.

Pooja

(P) Please girl just work yo' program,
And take the most you can outta this,
Feel me?

(O) O' well if you can't be out here with da' rest of us! Ain't shhh changed but the days. It happened for a reason.

(O) Or maybe quite simply you just needed a "break" from all the shhh (literally) that both you and I was doin'.

(J) Just always remember, they can't keep you forever, and your time will come. Just do what you gotta do, and keep your eyes on the prize: FREEDOM!

(A) And boo, whatever you do, make sure none of them females get the best of you!
You stronger than to let some other ass Female get to you. Stay strong, and be Coo', I'll keep the letters coming!

I Am

I am the hated one,
Spreader of the disease,
Carrying the blame unjustly.

I am the dying innocent.

I am the "ungodly" thing
Preached against in the church
Preached against in politics.

I am the loathed,
I am the shunned,
I am the feared.
I am gay.

I am dying innocent,
I am goddess,
I am god.
I am an unborn child.
I am a dying mother.

I am the blood from your wound,
I am living with you,
I am dying because of you!

These Everyday Faces

These everyday faces pass us by at 25 mph
Staring at you, mugging you
Laughing at you, wanting you
Loving you, hating you

Giving you that smile that says, "Hello, how are you?"
Giving you that look that says, "Boo, is there a problem?"

You look for someone you know
Your friend, your mom, your neighbor, your enemy
The president, your barber, Michael Jordan,
Jay Leno, Beyonce Knowles, or even your enemy

The guy who ripped you off for a stereo that didn't work
The girl who sold you peanuts at Pac Bell Park
The asshole who sold your scooter when you were 10.

But you're lost, a stranger amongst strangers
No idea who you are, or why you're here
Just that you're alone, lost in these everyday faces.

I am the loathed,

I am the shunned,

I am the feared.

I am gay.

Untitled Life

So, you say you've changed
That life now seems clearer
Say it all you want
Only you can face the man in the mirror
Your past is behind you
Now be the man you were meant to be
Taking control only happens
When you'll give it all up to stay free
You gave the game your all
Every bit of your soul
Searching and scraping at pieces
That could never make you whole
Endless nights
Fearing for when the sun would rise
Numb to the pain
Ignoring your loved ones cries
Jekyll or Hyde
Which one are you today
Always running from the stakes
Of this wicked game we play
An inferno
Burns money through a hole in your pocket
You tell yourself
Whenever you want you're the only one that can stop it
That's another lie
The devil of addiction loves to tell
Trying to stop yourself
Is like having no bucket
But seeing water at the bottom of a well
What did you want to be when you grew up?
'Member the dreams of your youth
Never thought you'd sell them out
Even for 180 proof
When you're on one
You thought you were on top of the world
Little did it last
Once your head started to swirl

ADAM AZEVEDO

Going through a whole lot of court proceedings at the moment, this next writer still finds time to drop heat on us. Lately we've been patiently waiting to get something from this outstanding poet as he writes with the return address to Sonoma County Jail where he's working full time for the prison ministry there. In his poem this week he calls out those who say they're going to change but never do, or never even put forth the effort to do so. We've all witnessed these kinds of people and some of us are these kinds of people. We hope all goes as well as can be for this next writer because he truly has a gift that we think the world should see. We've already benefited from his latest lesson - now it's your turn. Keep up the good writing Adam, we're keeping a real close Beat eye on you.

So now you've fallen
Maybe even to rock bottom
Crawling through the muck and mire
Is this really how far we've gotten?
The only way is up
There is only one way to stand
Humble yourself
Reach out and grab that helping hand
Have you had enough?
Or do you have just one more run
It's up to you
But your gravedigger has already begun
There are more prisons than schools
And even more unmarked graves
In this game the finish line is death
For anyone who plays
Whether you die on a curb
Or on a prison yard
Just remember
You're the only one that made life this hard
You've got excuses
Hell, no more than me
A little blind faith
Will shed freedom's key
Believe in something
Something bigger than you
Walk through the door
That others have already stepped through
On your right or left shoulder
You'll listen to one voice
Don't lie, cheat or steal
You always have a choice
No one else to blame
But many others to thank

I know asking for help
Is like blindly walking the plank
But the water below is freedom
Faith will see you through it
The twelve steps are good
But the thirteenth is just do it
We all talk a good game
But let's put the words to rest
To do the right thing when no one's looking
Now that's the real test
You're no worse than me
I've been there and done that
Not to trade war stories
But I've got more tread on my tires than Dunlap
I'm almost done
Hopefully you'll get the hint
In my shoes
I'm begging for just a ten-year stint
Relapse ain't a part of my recovery
That excuse won't cut it
I've learned at times to open my ears
And my mouth...well shut it
I pray your eyes will open
But the choice is yours
Let's walk together
Leave behind us these prison doors
I've got a future now
And a life full of hope
It wouldn't have happened
Had I not hit the end of my rope
Each one teach one
Now do your part
Asking for help
Now that's a good place to start
God Bless

Your past is behind you
Now be the man you were meant to be

LISA We first met this young woman when she was incarcerated in San Francisco's Youth Guidance Center and then again in Santa Cruz juvenile hall where she wrote really good poems. She sends her latest via email and as a free woman. And we're glad she kept us in her thoughts because as you'll see in her next poem, she hasn't lost her poetic ability. Her latest is about an addiction and it's written so cleverly that we can't help but point out the fact that she personifies it as a woman. Let her take you on a journey through her addiction as we've already went along for the ride while doing nothing but enjoying it.

My Addiction

She seduced and enslaved me,
Captured and betrayed me,
Shattered then remade me,
Inside her hell I could not see,
The evils that controlled of me,
So inch by inch she lured me in,
Her bait was always my most tempting sin.
And the pleasure she brought was enough to pretend,
The road I was on was not a dead end,
But you see on her streets,

You play by her rules,
Amongst losers, thieves, liars and fools,
Her power is great,
And her promises tall,
"Stick with me kid and you can have it all..."
She'll make you think your life is okay,
As you live for the bag just another day,
But your blinders are on, and your armor is thick.
You think you're the addict,
Who's found out the trick,
The players keep playing,
And the winner stays the same.
She's got all the power,
She's the one in control,
And you're just the fool,
Who's trapped in her hold,
She is the one in control,
The one who won't die,
Always in control,
Until you say goodbye.

BROTHA ACHIM RODGERS

This just in... We just got a bomb dropped on us by this next writer out of Salinas Valley State Prison in Soledad, CA. Though most of what he says is extremely controversial, it's still what he believes and he's definitely not afraid to let everyone else know. They say you can't fight fire with fire and that saying couldn't ring more true for us as fighting racism with racism. We think he points out some very realistic problems, but we also feel like his solutions could be a little bit more thought out. But that's just how some of us feel. Others feel like pieces like these need to be heard and could change one's views on things. But to each its own, so read on and let us know what you think. Great writing Brotha Achim. We really appreciate your insight as to how the world is working right now, or should be working for that matter.

My Rage! Black Rage!

I am the Alpha/Omega of all killers who have become the spiritual embodiment of millions of black victims from the womb to the tomb, past, present and future whose hearts and souls cry out for "justice and retribution." In sheer unremitting anger and unbearable, insufferable outrage, stemming from centuries of murder, genocide, rape, brutalization and poisonous pus festering psychological wounds of ghastly scars that ooze of hatred and utter-vile contempt that will not heal.

I am deathless, invincible, undefeatable, an avenging warrior athirst seeking vengeance of total elimination or annihilation. An empowered spirit that has been tried, trued, crystallized and resolved "by any means necessary". The product of hatred - I have become the epitome of hate!

I am here, the champion of all black champions, an undying, unsung legend. When violated you will observe the flaring of the nose and fire in the eyes. When my violence becomes uncontrollable, there is no escape; no mercy and I may miss my target.

My rage is a righteous sword, a volcanic tsunami eruption, spewing forth-untold years of repression, dehumanization and atrocities committed against blacks by ungodly, cowardly, insidious "racists." Power glutton architects of in America - who wear yellow neon stripes glowing down their backs.

I have become the essence of the world's victims turned deadly predator, allied with death, tireless, unrelenting and inexorably committed in the service of the Blackman's ultimate restoration of his rightful place in the world. I fear neither God, man or death, I am: Black Rage!

Open Letter To The State's Taxpayers

A call for the establishments for a legislative empowered citizen review board to supervise reforms within the California Department of Corrections (CDC). It is currently being mismanaged with gross-waste and is literally bankrupt in ideas without a clue, as is evident by the DOC's latest fiasco (banning of all erotic magazines to prisoners). In response to overcrowding and violation of Human Rights within the prison system. Unquestionably, the Director and his grey jump suits (Correction Officers) are in prison for the same reasons as this writer, "WE" couldn't make it on the outside (free-world).

Taxpayers, you are being exploited and ripped-off and only you can do something about it. Your money is only paying welfare salaries, for dead-end do-nothing jobs for the hard-core unemployable. It has been reported that sixty-percent of your prisoners shouldn't even be in prison; but, to release non-violent offenders would require the (CDC) to lay off hundreds on its bloated employment rolls.

In some instances for example, you are paying up to a hundred-thousand dollars to incarcerate a person for three-years for stealing two cartons of cigarettes. You are being taxed into the hundreds of millions of dollars and you are receiving more crime on your streets than ever before and near zero retributive-benefits. At some time-period in the taxpayer's evolutionary growth, you must decide between "retribution and contribution." Between adding to the misery and violence in this state or changing the conditions that is causing the misery and violence. To come to the realization that crime is the social-malady of all citizens and not solely the responsibility of the failed (CDC) to correct, no matter how much you pay them.

An empowered spirit that has been tried,
trued, crystallized and resolved "by any
means necessary". The product of hatred - I
have become the epitome of hate!

The Criminal: Victimizer Or Victim?

Society loathes you - the criminal - and wants to destroy you, acting as if you are an alien life-form from some distant planet. It doesn't understand that you have come from the bosom of society itself - a mirror reflection of those who hate and hunt you down. Society and the criminal are one and the same; to destroy the criminal, society must destroy itself. You could not have come into being without its collective will, its greed and corruption. In fact, society is a far greater criminal, thinking it has the moral high ground when, in reality, it represents moral hypocrisy. You are merely responding to society's ill treatment, abusing others because you have been abused and neglected. Society reacts by imprisoning you and allowing every imaginable atrocity to be committed against your humanity, all in the name of law and order and justice! Your true crime isn't that you're a criminal and have committed crimes; rather, it's that you're in competition with the acceptable criminal behavior of society - the larger and more powerful criminal.

Where lies the difference between the criminal and society when both are equally guilty? One does not become rich out of need but strictly out of greed. The criminal does not steal what he needs; he steals what he wants. For surely it isn't a crime to steal what one truly needs. Similarly,

society hasn't simply collected and stored what it needs, but rather every imaginable luxury and fulfillment of its desires.

There is a tale that centuries ago a burglar was brought before a magistrate on charges of burglarizing large sums of money and valuables from a very rich person's home. The criminal was sent to prison. Then the magistrate ordered the wealthy landowner to stand before him and sentenced him to prison for having amassed a fortune in excess of his needs. The magistrate's logic was that the criminal and the rich are one and the same, both having stolen - the rich more than is needed and the thief that which wasn't needed.

An affluent society doesn't become rich and opulent out of need, but out of greed. Likewise with the criminal. What is not understood is cause and effect and that all humankind are one fabric. When the dominant person or group in society takes disproportionately the wealth and resources of that society to the disadvantage of another group or individual, this is called a criminal act. More accurately, it is appropriating the misappropriated. Understand, there is no morally rich person; if you have more than you need to sustain your life and there is one individual who cannot meet his/her needs, then you too are a criminal, equally guilty of theft, of taking more than you need to sustain yourself.

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Universally, we are one people, one humanity. When one of us has fallen and the stronger have not looked back to assist but go on accumulating more wealth beyond any real needs, then they are likewise guilty of a crime - the greatest crime of all, the crime of inhumanity, the crime of not responding in a human manner to another human being.

Commentary 1:

"Achim, explain how it is that an individual who has no history of being abused and even comes from an affluent family will still engage in criminal activities."

You are asking for an explanation of human motivation, asking why anyone does anything he/she does. Rather than seek the unexplainable, examine the explainable - the reason the rich person wants to become richer, the reason a person with two homes wants a third, the reason a government makes war to steal another country's land, the reason, at any given time, many politicians are under criminal investigation or indictment. No one is immune from greed, corruption, or selfishness.

Commentary 2:

"Achim, are you saying that it is wrong to accumulate wealth in excess of one's need to sustain one's life, family, etc.? Are you saying that is the primary cause of crime?"

Yes! Imagine a dominant, aggressive group of squirrels who have gathered most of the available nuts and berries, leaving the remaining squirrels to forage with no alternative save to steal from the advantaged group. Indeed, the first criminal, the true criminal, is the one who has taken more than is needed! A criminal is also one who commits an act of aggression and transgression against another for money or any object of value. One who commits a senseless, heinous act without any purpose or design to gain money or anything of value is a mentally-ill person and not a criminal in the true sense of that word, albeit his or her act is definitely a crime! Why can't you understand that the have-nots desire to be haves, and the haves are a glaring example for the have-nots, a goal to be obtained? Imagine that there was a criminal organization which legislated that crime would only be permitted five days a week and on the weekends no criminal activity would be permitted under penalty of law. Society is that institutionalized criminal organization, and the criminal is the one who is committing crime on the weekends.

What society doesn't understand is that the wealth and resources of the world belong to all. Even an individual's knowledge is not solely that of its owner. Indeed, the world has a right of access to it, for in truth one could not have developed or accumulated knowledge without the assistance of others or through others need of it. Surely a hermit would not aspire to have a Ph.D. degree without others to share, utilize, and/or exploit this knowledge. Wealth isn't imported from some distant planet. It is take by exploitation of humanity (rightfully or wrongly) and this world's resources, the universal property of all. One who has simply come first, having paid nothing for all that was taken, can't thereafter charge others as criminals. What did the first person pay for all the wealth of the world that was available for the taking? In fact, all humankind are criminals if criminality is based upon not having paid anything for the gift of life. All the wealth and resources of earth were given to humankind. None of us have deserved or truly paid anything for them.

Commentary 3:

"Achim, if a criminal steals that which another person needs, is that not an unacceptable criminal act?"

Yes, but no more unacceptable than that of a criminal society which has stolen the resources of all others. That is

exactly what society does when it allows it's disfavored to be jobless, homeless and uncared for. That social injustice - not an individual act - is the root cause of most criminality. While crime is the product of greed (crime and greed being synonymous), injustice is the cause of crime.

Prison is a window of opportunities. Prisoners are a captive audience, and yet the government in all of its years in the prison business has yet to develop a system/program whereby the prisoners and society benefit from the enormous expense and horrendous effects of incarcerating a human being. It is only through the consistent effects of humane treatment, and reeducation that prisons, as unnatural and anti-life as they are, will ever reap any benefits to anyone, save those in the prison business and in prison employment.

Indeed, we're all victims, for none of us asked for life and we're all required one day to surrender it. Logic dictates that we need to learn to share that which belongs to all of us.

Commentary 4:

"Achim, you have described the situation but you have not offered a solution."

You obviously have an American mind, seeking an instant solution. If instant solutions in life were truly available, what would you do with it? Package and market it? Seeking a solution to the immaturity and greed of humanity is only a trick of the mind, allowing one to continue to look away from the problem, the immaturity of self. If greed and corruption are the problem, they are likewise the solution. A consciously awakened individual realizes that no matter how much is stolen, exploited, or hoarded from others, death will come and separate him from it. Have you not noticed that when a baby is born, the infant snatches and grabs at everything within reach? Most adults continue this behavior all the days of their life until death overcomes them, and their hands are open, leaving all the wealth and greed of their behavior.

What you truly want to know is how can you continue to maintain our socially acceptable criminal norms yet prevent the socially unacceptable criminal behavior. You do not want to sacrifice your greed, yet you want the criminal to sacrifice pursuing the fruits of your greed. This will not occur. The tree is judged by its fruit and the fruit of society is obsession with obtaining wealth in abundance. The criminal is the by-product of a criminal society. The realistic choices of society are to stop its criminal greed or teach the so-called criminal how to adapt and adjust to its socially acceptable criminal norms.

The criminal doesn't think of him or herself as a criminal, no more than Americans think of themselves as criminals after committing atrocity after atrocity against their own people and other nations. Americans have killed, raped, and stolen the bulk of the wealth of this land and the world in the name of progress, law and order, and now choose to label all those who would follow in their footsteps in the American tradition of thievery, rape and murder as criminals who like wise seek to appropriate, or rather, misappropriate, a piece of the American dream (illusion) of greed, deception and hypocrisy by any means necessary. In the immortal words of Friedrich Nietzsche, "If you can't be rulers and owners, then be robbers and ravishers." This is inwardly and outwardly the battle cry and motto of the alleged criminal in America today. Americans have sowed a rotten seed and now are reaping a rotten fruit and seek to ostracize the fruits of its collective tree as criminals, whereas criminality is as innate and inherent a way of life in America as wet is to water.

BROTHA ACHIM RODGERS (CONT.)*You*

Walking down every street and alley in every city and town, it is sickening. You have polluted the air, water and have raped the land for your selfishness to enrich yourself with things and trinkets. The homeless, injured and sick are not cared for. Your paradise lies in ruins, yet you still go about the business of exploiting yourself and others acquiring more things. And now you sit dressed in your fineries in synagogues, temples, mosques, churches, cathedrals pretending to worship thy God begging to be saved.

Get up and get out of your places of pretend and places of entertainment, you are an abomination, you are wasting your time. You are an embarrassment, a spoiled, selfish-child, who thinks you can with wish-prayers and lip-service, trick thy God. God knows beyond whatever you say and sees what you do and what you are not doing. In every tongue and in every language you have caused misery and suffering amongst yourself and others. You have turned this paradise into a garbage dump. You plead with thy God to be merciful and take you to heaven away from your own created pain and suffering. This shall not be. What you have created, you, yourself must also endure. Thy God shall give you no more and take nothing away. You shall be left alone to experience all that you've created. In your places of entertainment you call worship, you scream to the heavens of your undying love and devotion to thy God; yet you do not even love yourself, as is exemplified by your own deeds. It plainly reveals that you have never even met love. You and love are strangers. You have created scores of middle-persons, totaling into the millions in your religions to separate you and thy God, you from truth. And millions of books have been written about thy God, yet you do not know the likes and dislikes of God. You have chosen not to know God, only to read the tales of what others have claimed to know about God. That is why you have not known love because you have not known God. You have no relationship with thy God and you distrust and dissuade anyone else from seeking a personal relationship with thy God. In fear of cutting out your middle-person's religions and dead scriptures. Surely you must realize by now that God isn't the word God or any of the things written about thy God. God is none of those things. All the remembering and reciting of dead scriptures in the world will not engender a relationship between you and thy God. You have not tasted the 'fire' of God only the smoldering accounts of others. This why you have moved so far away from Godliness, from Godly things. You have so foolishly accepted tokens from others of the infinite love of thy God. Can you not understand that thy God is the God of all and not just those whom you've allowed to intercede, to separate you and thy God. As thy God has spoken to the holy men of old, likewise God will commune with you. You have accepted

in your haste and laziness a mere reflection of Godliness. God is love. Without knowing God, you'll never experience love, and without love, you will not experience the true beauties

and wonders of life; its lasting contentment. Remember, first and foremost, thy God does not speak through a middle-person nor a religion, nor is god an accumulation of dead scriptures. You do not understand, you do not trust that thy God is available to all. Godliness is a verb and you too must become a verb and a doing. Salvation is found in the doing and standards of your doing, is if it meets the criterion of love. If what you are doing is not felt in your heart and in the hearts of others, then it is not an act of love and will not bring you true and lasting contentment. Thy God isn't in need of your worship nor your place of worship, it is a joke and you're just fooling yourself. These are no more than mere places of business or the merchant and the middle-person. Be not like the hypocrite or the merchant, you cannot do business with God; what would you give God? All that you have has been given, would you give it back? God id liken to the farmer, who doesn't listen to the seed grow, rather observes its growth. The middle-person at your places of entertainment have sold you a promise of salvation to support the business of religion. You cannot cash in with God what you've been tricked into buying from another. Wages are given to the worker, not the shirker, nor those who loudly profess to be workers. And so shall salvation be given to those who have not only made a difference in the hearts and minds of others, but those who have become a difference.

Thy God has never promised you a savior, nor shall one be forthcoming. You have no need of a savior only a need to understand yourself and all that God has given you. You must grow up as distinguished from growing old. God is love, not to be worshipped or feared. There lies no heaven or hell outside of your own imagination; it is you who have created your own heaven and hell. God is not involved. Heaven and hell is no more than the creation of the fertile imagination of your middle-person, designed to create fear in you to allow control. What thy God has given is given unconditionally; there is now and never have been any retribution or payment of any sort to thy God. Try to understand there is nothing that the created can give the creator, when there lies no division for either. When you worship, you are worshipping yourself, when you pretend to serve God, you are simply serving yourself. Thy God has never placed any laws upon you, nor shall there ever be. Laws are to control, representing a finite concept. God is infinite: what isn't today, will in the natural order eventually become. God has no desire to intercede or to interfere and change today what will eventually become in time. Imagine a minor task you could accomplish at any time and you have all the time in the world to accomplish it. Then and only then will you have a glimpse of the workings of God. What is consequential to humankind is inconsequential to God. God is love and love unconditionally

Intellectual Self-Defense

Why is it when someone says, "This is the Truth!" our every sense becomes alert and there is this involuntary cynical smile which appears on our face? Two reasons: First and foremost, truth can't be spoken - that is it can't be spoken in its entirety, if indeed, someone were so inclined to speak the truth. And the mind is aware that truth can only be experienced, not shared or given to another. The other's truth is false, false in the sense that it isn't your truth.

Truth is only the truth of one's experience, that which endures and abides forever: you and your truth will abide even in death, after all where would it go? One must forever and always be on guard as to the other's truth. For as history and one's experience has proven, it is seldom your truth. Truth is an understanding and it can only come from within and never the other. Remember what I am saying: Knowledge comes from without and understanding, one's truth comes from within.

Intellectual self-defense is forever the seed of enquiry and not merely accepting the truth of the other as your own. That is not to say that you shouldn't trust the other's truth, but, trust it, don't believe in it, trust it only as a guide, until it becomes the truth of your experience.

We listen to those who support our illusions and the illusions of God, businesses and government. We do not

question and if we did, we rationalize - the means will justify the ends. We allow and share in our own victimization, because we do not want to think for ourselves. We would like to believe the culmination of thousands of year-old institutions are correct and just, otherwise, how could they have survived this long? It does not occur to us that these proven institutions of deception and corruption have survived, simply because mankind's greed makes him lazy. He wants the easy way, the most expedient and already accepted means to his ends, and the institutions of God, businesses and government provide those answers for him.

Conversely, it takes effort, commitment and courage to think for yourself and to stand alone against the human-herd, to look anew. Life is very short and what can we do? It has taken thousands of years for mankind to reach this point. And logic would dictate that it will take an equal amount of time to undo the institutions of mankind. Moreover, existence and the psyche of mankind don't like a void - they will demand something in the place of institutions.

Hence, the cycle of institutions repeat themselves. The solution is the near not the far, the one not the other. Not only is there not a universal truth, one is workable. Commitment and integrity must be to oneself and not church, businesses or governments. The solutions for the masses are most certainly not the solutions of the individual.

Change While You Can

Let me start off by saying "I care about my raza" and I want them to do better in life then I did... I started to "gangbang" at the age of 12. I got my first tattoo at the same age, just a lil' something on my fingers but it had a big meaning. I also started to do "crank" (Meth). And at that young age I thought it was so fun and cool, never did I think it would have a damaging effect later on down the line.

Every day I continued to party and run with the homeboys through the streets of San Jo (San Jose, Santa Clara County) robbing, stealing, getting drunk and getting high. One day at the age of a very young teen I went to a homeboy's house up in a little town called Gilroy for a little joy ride in a stolen car, we were taking turns driving from town to town while at the same time passing a bottle of Vodka around. It was me, my homie Shadow, and my two homegirls, Tweety and Puppet. Everything was all cool 'till we hear the sirens of the cop car in back of us, that's when shhh got crazy...

My homeboy Shadow was driving at the time so he decides to take us on a high-speed chase. We're on the chase for about 30 minutes going over 100 mph when we started to fishtail and the car loses control. None of us had seatbelts on when all of a sudden the car flips over six times. When the car finally stopped I started to yell to the homegirls in the back to run but trip out, I was in the back seat. Nobody else was in the car but me, I start to get out of the car when a bunch of cops yell, "Get down, let me see your hands now." They grab me and cuffed me up, minutes later the car burst into flames... My three friends were already in the cop cars so I was knocked out in the car and I didn't know it.

This was my first trip to Juve-Hall and a scary one too. From there on I've been in the system, from group home to group home, ranch to ranch and even to Boy's Republic down south.

Now I'm 32 years old and I'm still doing time. But here's the good thing youngsters, I'm going home in a few months and I'm ready. This is my true story so please take it to the heart and change while you can, while you're young. There's nothing worse than doing life behind bars so realize what you got in life before it's gone... Thanks for your time.

FLACO

For those of you youngsters who are tired of hearing where your life is headed if you keep doing what you're doing from people who only read about your life in books - those of you youngsters who actually pay attention to this section rather than just your own pieces. We have yet another treat for you. This next writer writing from Salinas Valley State Prison in Soledad, CA, titles his first piece, 'Change While You Can.' And while we're sure you've probably heard that saying a lot in your young lives, we also realize he's not just saying it, but he's giving perfect examples from things he's experienced of why you should change while you can. We hope you take heed to this because sometimes it's better to learn from someone else's mistakes before having to learn from your own. Just a little something to think about.

None of us had seatbelts on when all of a sudden the car flips over six times. When the car finally stopped I started to yell

You Are Somebody

This poem is for my precious daughter
Who means the world to me
Her beautiful smile and her sweet precious
Face it's a wonderful sight to see
The way she walks
the way she laughs
the way she blinks her eyes
It makes me happy
it makes me cry
It's been so long
since I said goodbye
No longer will I leave you all alone
In this world,
you're my life,
my love,
my all,
you're daddy's little girl
I love you Mariah Angel C.

BERNARD JACKSON

Writing from the California Correctional Institution in Tehachapi, CA, we bring you a letter from a man that's been through some things in his life. Now he's relaying those things to us as a way to keep us from going down the same path. And we're sure a lot of you readers out there can relate to his tale of pulling licks and selling drugs. It's difficult to grow up struggling because that really only leaves us two options - keep struggling, or find a way to stop. And too often do we choose a way to stop that's fast, easy, and comes with a whole bunch of consequences. Hopefully we can learn from others' mistakes. Let's start by reading this...

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Dear Beat Within

Sana Heslima Ku we'we! That means: ("much respect to you" in Swahili) How have you all been? I hope things have been going good for all the staff at The Beat. Well, the reason for this missive is to share my life story with all The Beat Within readers so please publish this missive because it will mean a lot to me if you do, asante. (thanks)

Well before I start this story I would like to make one thing clear to The Beat: I am not proud of my past! And my intentions are not to motivate the young Beat readers to live a life of crime. It would make me very happy if you youngsters would stay out of jail, get a job and do the right thing. So now that I've made myself clear to all the young Beat readers I'm going to start my story.

Well my birth name is: Vertral Bernard Jackson but my moniker is: Mr. R-drum. I grew up in a housing projects in San Bernardino California known as "Delmenn Heights," my childhood was very hard growing up in the projects with two older brothers, one older sister, a crack head father, and a mother who worked her hands to the bone trying to support us. I never did like the idea of my mother working so hard, so at the age of ten I took my cousins gun and became a member of the notorious streets of the slum.

I started off as a "stick up kid" I used to go to the rich part of town and stick up the rich white folks for what ever I could, their money, their shoes, their diamonds, etc. It didn't matter to me because I only had one thing on my mind and that was: get rich or die trying. At first my mother would not accept the money that I offered to her because she knew it was blood money, crime money, but slowly she started to accept the money because we were really struggling. At the age of twelve I got locked up in Juvy and was sentenced to do one year in a group home that's when my world got introduced to the dope game. I ran from the group home and started living with my big homie, he was a big time drug dealer. I started out as a "look out man" (watching for cops) then he slowly started teaching me how to chop keys and cook dope when I learned how to do that, he gave me four ounces of "hard white" and three thousand dollars and told me how to get my grind on.

By the time I was fifteen I had the keys to my own condo and I was rollin' in a "BMW" my big homie that put me in the dope game got sent to a federal prison for life. So he gave me the address to his dope connection so when I need to re-up I'll know who to go to. By the time I was 16 I got locked up and sentenced to five years in "CYA" I told my girl to get all my money together and put it away until I come home so that's what she did (I knew I could trust her that why I was with her). When I came home all my money was there! All 200,000 dollars of it! So I got back in the dope game and for three years everything went smooth but one night on May 9th 1999 I caught a murder case and now I'm in prison for murder. Game Over!!!

So to all the young Beat readers I would like to say this. It's not worth it young homies! The game is RAW! Y'all need to get ya' minds right and stay out of game, 'cause once you get deep in the game it's very hard to get out, and some folks never make it out! So stay in school or get a job little homies, because the street game is the wrong game - them evil, evil streets.

PRETTY BOY This next writer is utterly amazing. He always hits us with a whole lot of good writing and this week is no different. He starts off with a continuation of his autobiography, "The Memories In My Life," and in this story you can see where he went wrong and hopefully can apply it to your own lives. Then he drops a rap on us that's so hot we suggest everyone read it. He uses an art form (hip-hop) that's usually abused with boasting about material possessions and degrading women. But he uses it in a way that not only teaches but also offers hope to those who choose to read it. He then concludes with a poem for our writing contest, but unfortunately we didn't get to it in time and the contest deadline is long gone. From the looks of it, he would've been a real formidable contender. He's writing from Pleasant Valley State Prison in Coalinga, CA.

The Memories In My Life (Chapter Three)

The fight lasted awhile no one was stabbed but I'm sure a lot of you have been in these foolish things so I won't go into details. Of course we were expelled and such but really I could care less - nothing mattered to me but putting in work and my homies. Everything else in my life was irrelevant!! As we ran I can remember and still hear the teachers yelling to us... I can still hear Chucky and Creeper laughing and the way the wind felt on my face. It all seems like it was just yesterday.

"Hey Carlos, man was that fun or what, folks?" said Chucky. Creeper began to laugh. "Man did you see me I was creepin'," he said.

"You're a fool," I said laughing with my homies. "Well you guys I'm going over to my house and take the heat now but I'll holler at you homies later," I said.

"Are you sure?" asked Chucky.

"Yea homie, I better go see what the Queen gots to say about this."

Chucky laughed "Alright homie I'll call you tomorrow," he yelled.

As I was walking down the street I could remember thinking boy I'm about to hear it... Boy is she going to be pissed! I walk through the door. "Hey mom I'm home," I say.

"Carlos what did you do at school today?" she asks.

"Do what mom? What in the hell are you talking about?" I say.

"You were in a fight with your so called homie at school today your teacher called..."

"That teacher is crazy - a racist. I don't tell you he hates me. They make up all types of stuff to get us kicked out of school," I say.

"Carlos you're grounded and that's all there is to it," said my mom.

"Whatever," I say as I reach for my jacket.

"Carlos get back here," she yells.

"Mom I'll call you later..." I run out the door and take a big whiff of fresh air. Feeling free that I didn't have to hear her b/s at the moment. She never understands as I think to myself. Well maybe that night I should have listened... Maybe she really did know what she was talking about because that night I went to Juvenile Hall for the very first time... Even though this was my very first trip it was just the beginning of a life full of incarceration, lies, and misery... How foolish I was...

"Alright take off your clothes and strip it out" I take off my clothes and then follow orders of this crazy staff... squat and cough all the basics you brothers/sisters already know. I got to the unit and was surprised to see homies I know - some homies on the way to camp, some to CYA and others serving time.

My first time the place was "co-ed" but to the fact of young hormones raging eventually we were split up except for the serving time unit... I really was glad I didn't have to be here alone... having my homies around meant a lot. But a deep lesson I had to learn was when you truly need your homies they are nowhere to be found.

"Carlos you want to make bed rolls?" asks Orlando Perry the staff.

"Yea," I say. I get up and get my pants and shirt that are creased up. I put on my new Chuck Taylors then walk out... As I'm doing the rolls this white guy walks in... he is looking at me and it is starting to get me mad.

He walks on over and says, "Hey Carlos, how are you doing?"

I ask him, "How did you know my name?" I glance over at Orlando the staff already knowing the answer.

He says, "Hey, do you know about God?" I start to laugh and say "Get out of my face with that shhh..."

He smiles... "My name is Marty Robbins and God wants to tell you he loves you," he says...

I put down the bundle and say, "Look, it's good what you are trying to do, but I really don't care about your God," I say. "So please just bounce down the hall with that..."

He smiles and walks off.

Throughout that whole day I was thinking, "Does someone really love me?"... Who is God... and what made this rich white guy walk up to a Mexican gang member... the words that echoed in my mind all throughout that day was "God wants me to tell you he loves you." I can still hear those words loud and clear today!

Chapter Four:

I woke up and went to the dining room for dinner... Today they were going to try to run program with Nortenos and with the Surenos... Man were they trippin' I thought. I sat at the table and started to talk with a couple homies. There was only about five of us and about fifteen/sixteen of the opposition. I tell them, "Look when we come out be ready. I'm going to start it with Oscar D. because he is running his mouth 'cause I was with his sister." The homies all agree and we roll it up to our cell until school release.

My door pops and I take off my sweater but keep on my shirt. I walk to the school and sit in the back. Oscar is already dogging me but I ignore it for it's not the right time yet. After every one is seated I look at Oscar... I hold my head to him and he nods back. I get up also and so does Oscar and as we met half way punches started flying. No words were exchanged for nothing needed to be said...

"Stop fighting," yelled the staff. We kept on going bumping the tables around. The staff began to pepper spray us but we refused to stop. "Dammit," yelled the staff... then they ran in and slammed us. "Carlos your ass is going to Depaz maximum security for this," yelled the staff. I get down to the maximum security unit and was thrown in my cell without a shower. I went to the sink and began to shower by taking a "bird bath".

"Hey Carlos," someone yells. "Yea who's that," I yell. "Smurf fool, what's up homie?" he asks...

"Just chillin' folks... had to handle a little business you know?"

"That's right," says Smurf. "Hey homie we got a lot of homies down here so don't trip..."

"Okay homie... let me shower real quick these fools got me feeling like a damn Jalapeño Pepper," I yell. The whole hall started to laugh when I said that.

The next morning I get up and go to the dayroom. Me and some homies start playing dominoes and chillin'. I went to court and I knew I would be locked up for awhile so I was already having my mindset on adjusting to this routine. Later on, about a couple weeks later it's Christmas.

Many family members are showing up and I was wondering if my mom would ever show. A few moments later I hear, "Carlos you got a visitor..." the staff says. "Kneel down and put your hands behind your head... cross your legs and entwine your fingers," the staff says. They come in and shake me up with leg irons, cuffs and a waist chain.

I get to the little room and my mom sees me... Tears fill her eyes "Oh mijo," she says... she throws her arms around me and I feel her body shake as she cries. I can still feel

her heart next to mine... Can feel how safe I felt and how she really truly did love me. The whole time I fought back tears.

I was always told that it was a "weakness" to cry... My dad told me "men don't cry" he used to say... I learned later my father was so very wrong when he told me that.

We sat down and had a good little talk. Discussing plans for the future and court. My mother truly loved me and wanted me to succeed I wished I would have listened.

The following day the staff came to my door... "Carlos you have a visitor..." I got up and was shackled and taken to the visiting cell. It was empty...

"Where is my visitor?" I ask.

"He will be here shortly," the staff says.

I wait for about 5 minutes and the door opens up. It is Marty Robbins the minister.

"What do you want?" I ask, already tired of dodging from this guy. "I came to say Jesus loves you," Marty said.

"Dammit, I don't care about God or His love so let's drop this issue now, okay," I say.

"Okay," says Marty. "Then what do you want to talk about?" "You... why you keep coming down here... what do you do on the streets?" I ask him.

"I am a teacher and a man of God," he says.

"Oh... I get it so you think you're doing a good deed by coming to talk to some troubled Juveniles?" I ask.

"No I came to tell you what God has put in my heart and Carlos I will continue to come and tell you about God's love because you are a special person," he says.

After he said that I knew I was not going to get rid of

PRETTY BOY (CONT.)

him. So I decided to allow him the chance of saying what he got to say. I mean come on now this guy keeps showing up so he must have a motive... "Look I'll allow you this one time to talk to me... if you say something dumb I'm gone, okay?"

"Amen," he says. "Have you ever prayed before?" he asks.

"No," I say. "Well let's open up in prayer..."

As we bowed our heads I felt a weird sensation over my body as he spoke... the hairs on the back of my neck stood and I was feeling uncomfortable. Later I learned the reason for me feeling uncomfortable in the session with Marty is because I had demons and spirits in my body. Since the Holy Spirit was there I felt like running because the demon of me was scared of God. At the end of the session Marty asked, "Can I come see you in a few days?"

"Yea sure," I say.

"Okay you just keep an open mind. Remember God loves you and in time you will learn to understand. Carlos God has a plan for your life," he said.

That night as I lay in bed I think back to our session. The weird feeling I felt, the way Marty spoke about God with such passion. It was all un-understandable to me. But later I would fully understand and then some. Is God real? I asked myself... the last thing that was on my mind as I fell asleep that night was his exact words "Carlos, God has a plan for your life!!" (To Be Continued...)

I do not glorify it, nor do I like it! I only speak it this way to show you how I was feeling, so you can relate to the things that happened in my life.

Introduction To The Memories In My Life

Brothers and sisters yes it is I once again extending to you some words of wisdom from my heart. I was so "glad" to see The Beat publish my work I sent in. For a minute I thought that it was a no go. But once again the Lord has blessed me with allowing me the opportunity to share my testimony, life, story and other things as well with you. I would like to address a very important fact that has been on my mind so allow me the opportunity brothers/sisters to address it... I DO NOT CONDONE the behavior in my story. I do not glorify it, nor do I like it! I only speak it this way to show you how I was feeling, so you can relate to the things that happened in my life. I keep it real at all times so I'm going to speak it real for the truth to this life style must be exposed.

My brothers and sisters I love you all and in this struggle we must lift each other up. Allowing us to help one another get through these hard times. Keep in mind that in future chapters I cannot explain my day-to-day life because there is not paper or ink for me to do that. But I will share some real moments throughout my journey to give you a feel of the life I lived and how that path only leads to destruction! With that I shall conclude this short "note." Just some real words for your enlightenment on what this story holds.

You all are in my prayers and I hope that the Holy Spirit will be implanted in your hearts, that by doing so you shall see Satan's lies and make the step to rise up out the darkness for your life, your families for truly as the world has said, "We are treasures out of darkness..." pure, special and unique in God's eyes... Jesus loves you... God Bless... Allow us to continue!

Turning Back The Hands Of Time

Turning back the hands of time be careful of the choice you choose,

'Cause (a lot) worse could have happened
Then what you have already been through...

It would certainly be a gamble a definite roll of the dice,
An outcome to make you smile or an outcome to make you cry...

I've been a gangster, a killer, a drug dealer, a thief,
I've sold women, transported weapons,
And ran organized crime on the streets...
And I ain't proud but I would not turn back the hands of time,

I bet this blows your mind so let me tell you why...
If I was to go back to change all the choices that I made,
Then I wouldn't be the true man that I have come to be today...

I'd rather stand on God's word and use all that I've been through

As living testimony so that I can relate myself to you...
Been there, done that and don't wish to do it again,
Changed my heart, changed my mind
And had to change my choice of friends...

No I would never attempt to ever even try to go back,
Because I've stood up dusted myself off and got right back on track...

All of the memories of things that I've been through
You may think that I'm 50 but I'm really only 22...

As I sit and think and the time passes me by,
No I wouldn't go back not even attempt to try...
Because if I did that it is being fake and standing still,
And brothers now that I'm changed I want to keep all of mines real...

Think to yourself and so why go back to passed time,
Look at how strong we are so special you and I...
Endured through the worst knocked down bruises and cuts,

Shook it off dusted off then got right back on up...
Survivors are what we are bright stars in God's eyes,
Do think about your choice before you turn back the hands of time"

PRETTY BOY (CONT.)

The Beat

First and foremost allow me to extend my utmost love and respects. I hope that this letra finds you in "happiness" and a "smile" for surely I'd want it no other way...

I'm in further hopes that all the young gente out there is doing mas firme and that comes from mi corazon (my heart). Well brothers and sisters now on the topic at hand...

I've been reading and it seems (a lot) of you are going through a lot... so many different feelings and problems it's kind of all hard to address. But once again your boy here is going to extend a little wisdom and insight from the heart. In life we at times focus more on the negative then we do on the positive. This can cause a big mistake on our part and bring a lot of depression that is really unnecessary!

Life is not easy and anyone who told you it was lied to you... being successful in this world, being all that we can be, having all that we desire is hard but then it is also "possible!" we think in the negative sense a lot don't we? Which leaves me to ask do we take things for granted? The situation you find yourself in ain't as bad as some others... (Wait!)... If people have gotten through and succeeded in "worse" circumstances than us then what does that mean? (Yes there is hope for us all.)

Everything we may encounter in this world may not always be explainable... so many mysteries in this world that it can drive us crazy always trying to find an answer to one of them... so what do we do is the question correct? This is what we do brothers/sisters we learn to "adapt!" To do so will take a (open mind) to attempt to do what? Yes you knew that this was coming to "stop thinking in a negative way." For once let us not focus on the problem, but allow us to focus on the "solution" to fix the problem! But then you might say what about the things I cannot change? What do

I do then? Well once again I'll say it we (adapt).

All the time in life we use words like "That's too hard" - "Impossible" - "It can't be done..." what would the world be like if for everything we thought about we came to one conclusion and that would be "possible!" Possible should be a word of hope... because where something is possible it means it can be done. So that would mean it is "possible" for me to be a real man... it is "possible" for me to be a real woman... it is "possible" for me to graduate... it is "possible" for me to succeed... then it is "possible" for me to change!

My beautiful brothers/sisters allow your mind to expand like the waves expand over the sands. Use your corazon as a source of strength to get to you through these hard times... you can do it for the ability to do so has always been with you. Your heart has been saying, "Let's do this we can get through it together," but your mind was deceiving you. (Yes) it's true at times we can be our worst enemy! But since it's "possible" to change it doesn't have to be that way. Brothers/sisters whatever you're going through is only for a season. How long that season will last for I do not know but what I do know is that it (won't) last forever! Pick yourself up... dust yourself off... look the problem in the eye and say "I won't run no more, I'm sick of you bangin' me around and guess what I won't let you ruin me anymore!"

1. Change... 2. Adapt... 3. Possible... three strong words to live by and remember: (C-A-P) - Change=When we change we "adapt" - Adapt=When we can adapt brothers/sisters no matter the situation or circumstances anything is - Possible= The possibilities to what we can do or accomplish is endless!

Well family I will end there for this week just wanted to extend my heart and wanted you all to know that I love you and you all are in my prayers... Remember let no one get you down... and always remember where there is a will there is way. Remember when things get hard... when things seem like they can't get better... when it seems like you have to give up remember the #1 word: "Possible!" Your homie,

Listen To Your Hearts

Chorus (2x):

My brothers and sisters allow me to say
That after all the stormy nights comes a bright and sunny day.
Keep your head up and hold on strong
And listen to your hearts and you won't go wrong.

First Verse:

I spit this verse to you all who have been neglected
True-to-this rhyme understand you're perfected
I ain't one to tell lies on what I'm speaking to you
Just steady in the same struggle so I gots to stay true.
Cause I've been on them streets I've done slept in the gutter
Been stabbed in the back and rejected by my mother
I know it's a hard life that at times we see
Seeming like it'll never end all this pain and misery
Up on our shoulders it's stacked and it's weighing us down
Every time that we get up it seems we get knocked back down
We say they don't understand and that maybe the truth
But listen to the next words that I spit to you
Don't worry about them for it's not their life
Aim for your dreams spread your wings and fly high
We all in this same struggle so we gots to continue on
Follow your heart let it guide you and you won't go wrong

Chorus (2x):

My brothers and sisters allow me to say
That after all the stormy nights comes a bright and sunny day.
Keep your head up and hold on strong
And listen to your hearts and you won't go wrong.

Second Verse:

Next verse that I spit is aimed at you Queens
All the women in this world cause I want you to see
That your special, unique and truly one of a kind
Special in your own way feel it in your heart and mind
Don't think you need a man or that hot sexual action!
It's a lie up in your mind that is a major distraction

No need to sell you bodies or hit that dope

Because if your heart still beats my sisters there's hope
When you walk be proud and keep your head held high
Remember that you're pure inside the beholder's eyes
Some men will whisper, "I love you" just to try to get it
But don't go out like that because them guys is just twisted
Your body is like a temple so put protection to that
Cause there is more pleasure in this life then laying on your back
Like your dreams, your future, your hopes, your wishes,
Shoot for them all let it be get it by your ambition
And remember your beauty is not just on the skin
Because my queens what truly matters is who you are within
So no matter what they say believe in you and stay strong
And follow your heart let it guide you and you won't go wrong

Chorus (2x):

My brothers and sisters allow me to say
That after all the stormy nights comes a bright and sunny day.
Keep your head up and hold on strong
And listen to your hearts and you won't go wrong.

Third Verse:

Last verse I direct to all my patnas for real
Them men who are kings steady stackin' that scrill
Get your paper I agree let's go stack them stacks
But in doing so not allow the money to turn us to criminal acts
Because at times that we grind seem to turn to greed
And don't realize all the problems those ourselves seem to bring
And the pain that we cause to the women on Earth
Is steady getting out of control and still we continue to hurt
Degrading our woman all up under silk covers
Disrespecting our girls, wives and at times even our mothers
It's time for us to stand and to truly change
That's why I picked up the microphone and set down the gauge
Went from guns and keelos to a new steelo
Because we got to shed some light, unite, and put a cease to this
evil
As you lay your head to rest and I end this song
Follow your hearts let it guide you and you won't go wrong

This Boy I Know

This boy I know his name is Adrian but he is best known as Tit. He has had time to think since his incarceration in CYA in a lock-up program. He has thought of all the wrong things he has done and thinks what if that was him.

As you know by now I am Adrian, but I see myself as a new person yes I am still from Fillmore but I would like it to be positive 'cause I have lost four friends since I've been lock-up OJ, Sky, Spank, and Thizz and I think like that could have been me if I was out.

So now I know you have to be locked up to figure out this is a phase in life.

ADRIAN We are so honored to share the story of Adrian known to many of you readers as TIT. Well, well, well, TIT is back with as good as any piece that has been featured in this issue, and that piece is titled, "A Kid I Know." Adrian writes us from the CYA's Preston Youth Correctional Facility in Lone, Ca. Adrian was once a participant in our weekly writing workshops in SF/YGC. Today this young man sounds like he is thinking beyond the moment and is actually looking at the bigger picture. WE know the test will come when he returns home. We hope he has the courage and leadership to not fall into further traps.

Loved Ones

Loved ones are the ones you can count on.
Loved one's are the one's that will be there
through your ups and downs.

Loved ones are the one's that will always be loyal to you.

Loved ones are sometimes hard to figure out

because you don't show them enough attention.

My loved ones are the people that check up on me
while I'm doing time in CYA for being Tit
the one to do stupid things.

Make sure you show everyone attention that tries to be in
your life.

A Kid I Know

I know a kid from San Francisco Fillmore District that has been through ups and downs. He is from a place presently known as Uptown Harlem which has been in his life since he was born.

He had already been expelled from Golden Gate Elementary School when he was 9 years old for hitting a teacher. Then went to Rosa Parks Elementary and graduated to the sixth grade. He then had been marked as a young dangerous kid. He went to Marina Middle School and was kicked out for hitting another teacher. He then began to go to Presidio Middle School where he was expelled for having multiple fights. He then was sent to a continuation school for angered youth where he began to gradually do his school-work. He continued to do good and was put in a continuation school for 9th graders to 12th graders.

He was only at the school for one week and stole the principal's wallet and got put on probation.

Almost six months later he went to juvenile hall for a gun case. At that time he felt the pain in the streets 'cause he lost his first cousin on January 11, 2003. He was in the halls for three to four months and was given a stay away order from the hood. He begins to be more violent. We went from fighting (with fists) to guns in less than a month. He failed the stay away in less than a month.

He went back to juvenile hall and was sentenced to nine to twelve months in a group home which he failed in eight months.

He then went back to juvenile hall and was sentenced to nine to twelve months in another group home.

He went to the group home and began to see light and started doin' cool in school and got a job. Then he went off and got fired and was sent back to the halls after nine months. The director gave him a chance to go back for two weeks and do good and he completed it and was released from the group home.

He had lost a close friend since his stay which happened

in August 20 or 21. He went home and began to fit back into the lifestyle of guns, money, and beezies. Which one night led him to a corner store on his block where a crime was being committed which he didn't know and he walked right into it. The police found a firearm in his possession. He was charged with the crime that had been committed. He was in the wrong place at the wrong time.

This led him to juvenile hall. He then started a racial riot that led to him getting a battery case that hurt even more. He was moved to the max unit where he became even more violent and started another riot which led him to being committed to CYA.

He went to CYA with an attitude that he didn't care which led him to a lock-up program. He begins to do good and progress for a short while in his program and school. He then had got involved in four riots which happened in one day that led him to another lock-up program. Now he is stressing he has caught more than one year, has lost four people he loved.

Now he feels he has to come home to his family and loved ones which love and is loyal to him. He has accomplish so many things he has his high school diploma, and has completed Anger Management. This guy has been through so much stress and pain.

He wants to bring it to the light. This kid I know has spent almost two birthdays in CYA. This kid I know happens to be myself Adrian formerly known as TT. I have put all my stress and pain into it and to let people know what I have been through. Please Beat readers take this as advice and stay out of jail because one year in this system it's pretty hard to get out, you gotta be focused.

TYRONE ROBINSON Most of the world would probably like to believe racism doesn't exist, but deep down we know it not only exists, but it's also shaped the way we run things in our country tremendously. This next writer captures that idea in his poem 'Beautiful Black Baby.' He humanizes it by describing someone more innocent and pure than all of us and that's a baby. However, because the baby's Black, it already has more odds stacked against him than if he wasn't. It's a great poem and we suggest you read it.

Beautiful Black Baby

"Beautiful Black Baby"
Wrapped in innocent love,
"Beautiful Black Baby"
Knows not of an unjust world

"Beautiful Black Baby"
Your daddy had gone to war,
"Beautiful Black Baby"
He's fighting and here we are.

"Beautiful Black Baby"
Daddy loves us so,
"Beautiful Black Baby"
He had no choice... but to go.

"Beautiful Black Baby"
There's news - police killed your dad,
Freedom and peace we never had...

"Beautiful Black Baby"

WILLIAM GRAJEDA Another blast from the past, from Beat issue 7.41, it reads... Those of you who read the last issue of *The Beat Within* are well familiar with this next writer, especially if you read the editor's note contest pieces in *The Beat Without*. In our contest, which was open to all readers, we wanted to know, "What do you think needs to be done to improve the whole Juvenile Justice System? Tell us of your Juvenile Hall Experience." Writer, William Grajeda took this topic to heart, and because he shared so much with great detail, he is our contest winner! The following piece is his last installment of his life in Juvenile Hall. We want to congratulate William as our first-place winner, who will receive a hundred dollar money order as well as all our writers who are worthy of recognition. William writes us from Pelican Bay State Prison SHU.

Juvenile Times: My Last Seven-Month "Farewell"

I feel a dark winter wind blowing against the ominous night-life of mischiefs, I shiver, as it's sharp brisk chill sneaks through my derby collar to caress me like a trembling suitor upon my nape. A silver-menacing glow from the half moon light penetrates through the dim alley of darkness I'm in; a menacing glow pursuing, reproachful, escapeless... My heart is racing, I'm out of breath, I hear the sirens in close pursuit; sirens calling, threatening, demanding, unrelenting. From one dark alley to the next my heart beats in dangerous anticipation, my mind is out pacing my frantic, desperate Nike race. My eyes are trying hopelessly to blink away mary jane's bewildering haze, eyes blinking with devilous zeal.

Sirens deafening, whispering in my ear foretelling of a cold darkness to come, foreboding sirens shattering the placid, solemn, mischievous night air, mercilessly pursuing, warning the rest of the unseen night creatures away from their covetous endeavors. Panting, breathless, gasping for air, racing adrenaline pounding with every beat of my anxious heart, dangerous tensions driving the very speeds of an already ill-fated chase. Over fences, through dim alleys of strife, through strange back yards with starving dogs, pass all the weary souls of the night, my eyes desperately implore through the dense wild jungles of the dark for a hidden corner to escape from my tireless, pursuing beast.

Tainted crimson stains, viscid, like a burgundy violet wine spilled in the chaos of wild times, spilled from the depths of the streets dark soul, drip from condemned hand, and streak my Charlie Brown and Ben Davis pants. Born in the cruelty of the unsparing ghetto streets, this is the jungle in which my gamin' natures have been forged; this is the wilderness where savage instincts determine your strength to survive, where your unruly nature is your salvation to longevity. Where I find myself being hemmed in as the foreboding sirens draw ever near and the helicopter spot light pursues every dark shadow that would bring me a secure reprieve.

"On the ground, hands behind your back, cross your legs, face down, if you make one more I'll be forced to shoot!"... comes the blaring warning from the k-nine (cop) cars ... light flashing, engines idle, mad... "Seditious thoughts run through my head, the dark natures stir in the depths of my young soul, stirring wildly. Bewildered eyes no longer gazing in a mary green haze; ambivalent eyes staring in a youth of tenebrous rebellion, in a defiant rage. I am fourteen years old, fifteen is more near... I feel the knee of some over grown cop pressing in to my back. Another one holding my neck, while the other brutally slaps the iron cuff on my wrists. Trying to intimidate me with their taunting words—tauntless in the ears of my dark youth, superfluous as they enter in to mocking ears... taunts about Juvenile Hall!

They must not know that's like my second home by now, the must not know that place was built for me; or have they forgotten the daily poverty they patrol, have they forgotten how we insure their monthly paycheck? A bit farfetched to pretend they don't see, if you ask me! Or maybe everyone is just used to it.

I stare out the back of the cop car window thinking I stained my new pants, thinking I'm in serious trouble this time... I gaze at the passing streets of my wild boyhood. I gaze at the familiar street signs that come with your first childhood memories of playing in those streets. I stare long-

ing, remembering another time knowing a cold monotonous dark awaits my company. I stare thinking about an affectionate loved one or two, I stare looking with all eyes somewhat still dazed by a sobering joint or two. Thinking, I'll be back on that street soon. Thinking, I know a girl or homeboy who lives down one dark street or another, as I pass reluctantly by, captive, captured, careless... Thinking, damn I was supposed to call this girl up. Thinking, damn, the homeboy is going to the carnival without me this time. I stare looking at my familiar ghetto streets — not knowing this was the last time they would see me, not knowing that this was going to be my last day of being free... that this was to be the last glimpse of freedom that would be left to my adolescent memories.

As I am being hauled off into the depths of the winter night — towards that darkness that awaits to embrace my young soul, I'm thinking how I started off the day with my creased Ben's, Charlie Brown, and deciding whether I want to wear my Stacy Adams or Nikes while touching up the palm comb class. With a joint in one ear and another lit, talking with one homeboy or another making plans for the day. Then suddenly I feel my resting heart begin a rapid pace, a stir of adrenaline dances in the dark light of my eyes and I grow restless as my mind sees the crimson tears left by the wounded shadows of our perilous life.

I think just another wild night I have survived in the jungle, yet I can't but help feel some deep sorrow of stirring humanity in the depths of my young soul, a stirring however, unable to reach the conscious depths of my adolescent life that has since birth, been nurtured by the desolate, coarse, neglected hand of ghetto cares; unusual by the ancient pacifier of wretched poverty."

"But hey, I'm only a young tough street kid..." so my thoughts wander back to some party I went to that was all the way live, not even vaguely thinking that would be the last party I would jump in — not suspecting that it was the last party I would attend.

The Hall

"Throw him in that tank over there." The Intake staff says, at my arrival, to the cop — not yet catching sight of my face. "What's your name juvenile?!" he says. Looking up at me for the first time he suddenly exclaims: "Hey are you back again? What's going on with you?" He says, smiling as he recognizes my face... looking at the reports left by the police. He gives a whistle and says, "well you're in here for the long stay on this one." I smile with all the rebellious mockery of my youth, as I reply, "I started missing you and all those extra trays..." Every one in Intake knows me by now, they look at me perhaps struck for a moment by a sad thought, then brushing it away with a smile and a extra sack lunch they had left on the side. "You know the drill," they say, and without another thought I'm back in to the daily Juvenile Hall routine.

I sit in the cold silence of my concrete cage no longer intimidated by its perpetual stare, no longer swayed by its stoic glare. My eyes implore the wild darkness for it's tepid embrace. I'm embraced by the enchanting darkness of depravity; my young soul had already been lost in the inherent darkness of the ghetto life, had already found the inevitable road leading him into a world beyond the tiny walls of his Juvenile Hall. Beyond the life of battery packs and razors melees of CYA, into the infernal depths of a prison's dark rage, into an incessant darkness of depravity that would devour even the intrepid flames that flicker in the dark shadows of prison walls."

I sit there in intake lost in the myriad thoughts of my feral mind. I sit there in intake ready to go to the ghetto side where my face is familiar to the eyes of all. Where my eyes see the integral afflictions that torment the souls of poverty, in a struggle to free themselves from the grip of Juvenile Hall; desperately struggling to escape from the impoverished despairs that weigh so heavily upon their homeless hearts.

I walk through that same ghetto corridor that seemed to intimidate my young eyes years before, that how appear to me as a distant thought that has long lost its care. As I enter into my unit, a few steps tougher up in age, now that I'll be fifteen soon, I glance around and see a familiar face or two and nod in the casual silent, "what's up! Q'vo!" As I

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continue to scope out the day room, noticing several new faces looking at me, I notice one or two tough kids staring a moment too long, they haven't met me yet obviously, I guess I'll have to introduce myself another time whether they like it or not and show them this is now my Juvie place.

I have embraced the darkness that for so long frightened me with its eerie whispers of insensate feelings. I'm now whispering the dark cold endearments to the Juvie souls that share my afflicted, lonely, beseeching, seditious eyes of the barrio, ghetto streets, of broken homes and frigid poverities.

I sit in the deafening silence of monotony as I fill the empty hours exchanging mischievous tales with my fellow Juvie souls — while we probably are contemplating the mischiefs of the next day; maybe there will be a little riot or spontaneous me'lee, we are the gamin spirits who found our lonesome natures unruly, forged together in our desperate need for a sense of family in our want to belong, to be loved, thus we found ourselves in a bond of tribal-like unity.

Silently, during the early first weeks of Juvenile Hall, my primary concerns revolve around the impending court dates, the implications in the court rhetoric that always seem to frighten our young minds with visions of doing time for a hundred years or some even darker vision of having to face some unknown darkness in a far off strange place, convinced we will probably lose an eye or get fatally wounded there. So we begin to develop an aggressive impulse, an automatic defensive/ hostile mechanism provoked by our own vulnerable fears. Whilst my restless thoughts of fresh memories on the streets begin to lose their sense of immediate importance with each monotonous day lasting longer in the shadows of Juvie life, with each passing day of venturing further into the darkness of mischievous intrigues... intrigued by the sense of tribal-like unity.

CYA Bound?

My second court date within a month, I find out they want to send me to CYA, "CYA! What about camp? What about a group home? Even some far off program?" I declare, perhaps just somewhat startled because the thought hasn't really quite sunk in ... "but wait I don't really care, didn't somewhere along the way I develop a longing curiosity in CYA. If pops and other loved ones all been there, isn't that the where the true strong survive, isn't that the place where I'll learn how to be tough just like them" —CYA ain't nothing they always said "you're tough just like us" and they would whisper a secret knowledge in you ear and by its possession, convincing you that now some how you already have an upperhand.

Defiant, rebellious, scared, cruel, timid, I stand in the tall shadows of Juvenile Hall facing CYA time... I feel a deep vulnerability of fear, of doubt growing inside the internal conflicts of the soul, threatening to unbalance my fragile mind, that is until the external forces of depravity, of the dark pressures of Juvie Hall register back into the wild darkness of conscious sight to repress any perceived vulnerabilities that might attempt to develop into compassionate affinities, into a sense of true humanity... where the dark impulses in progressing manifestations of depravity allow no room.

With each court date preceding the last, the more convinced I am that my CYA fate has come, the more I begin to lose care, as I run deeper into the depths of darkness, losing sight of freedoms sense... A riot here and there, a me'lee, I no longer care, even the tough kids in Juvie revere me, only a few like natures have grown cold like me. A few like natures who share the same fate as I, who has grown up in the wretched poverty of life. Who lost themselves in that same inexorable darkness as I.

Juvenile Isolation

Within two months, I find myself at home in the Juvie trenches, in the Juvenile Hall holes, losing myself in the icy concrete, colorless walls of a staring, strange silence, penetrating the wildness in my soul. Paralyzing me for a moment in its deep isolation, the timeless impulse momentarily suspended in privation, the external pressures briefly arrested in a solitary cage. Contemplating the next juvenile

WILLIAM GRAJEDA (CONT.)

me'lee... the next esteemed endeavor of tribal—unity...thus insuring greater tribal esteem"

Note; the Juvenile hole/ Juvenile trenches, hole seem to be very similar to the deafening silence of my first experiences inside "intake," and later experiences there. Only with the added knowledge I was being punished for hostile or defensive reactions or actions. However after the initial impact of my first stay in isolation, which lasted two weeks of sitting in my cell twenty-four hours a day — with one hour out of my isolation room every other night—and a shower as often as the cops wasn't lazy. Besides them taking my mattress every morning, at five in the morning, and serving me with food trays that had a bug or two in there, sometimes, I sat there in abstract thought. At times, perhaps, I felt an utter sense of despair, but because perhaps I had endured so many abuses and restrictions or deprivations as a gamin in the ghetto life along with a combination of analogous experiences character of that lifestyle — all of which helped allow me to easily adapt/ grow accustom to long periods of solitude in isolation. Thus, instead of isolation serving its intended design for punishment and conformity, it became an unconscious affinity to my wild natures. Of course I didn't like the idea of going or being in juvenile isolation, yet neither did I find myself dreading the atmosphere of the hole, despite all the attempts by the cops/staff to provoke distress at every sign of peace.

Where I saw some young kids like me, banging on walls, attempting to hurt themselves, screaming madly, I seemed to adapt to the habits of isolation with little effort, that is, after the initial prolonged silences has passed. The initial assault of monotony oppressive in its nature of totality... that often reminded you of some forgotten freedom that resurfaced from your dark depths, that momentarily strived the suppressed natures of longing, which always seemed to bring your thoughts to a fated despair—thus leaving you in a state of melancholy until you found some external idea to entertain your imagination with. While anticipating the counting days of returning back to your unit where the Juvenile homeboys proudly greet, revere, embrace your presence/ your return

I would spend many more occasions in juvenile isolation before my final departure, the longest being a month and a half.

Over the next couple months I found myself lost in the milieu of juvenile life, while every day contemplating my CYA fate. I had no idea this would be my last time seeing the inside of my what had become my beloved Juvenile Hall. I had yet to realize the feeling of a, of my bittersweet goodbye. Nothing ever changed in the daily routine of Juvenile Hall except when the occasional little riot or melee occurred. And yet does not the endless cycle of such disturbing violent reoccurrences in the daily behavioral patterns of Juvenile Hall become an essential feature of its very infrastructure.

I sat there in Juvenile Hall for the countless time, remembering my first time I spent ten days here when I was nine years old, confused, scared, wondering. Remembering how I came back on a few minor occasions at eleven and twelve, remembering when I first come to the boy's side frightened vulnerable within, yet rebellious, defiant on the facade as I began to succumb to the external darkness of ill-fated curiosities at the age of twelve, thirteen. And how I stood on the run for about six months, one time, before I got caught again, luckily it was just for that ol' Christmas leave, absconding warrant. I got released in a week — pops spoke up for mine. Remembering how I was running wild, confused, neglected, careless, reckless, dangerous at the age of thirteen, fourteen, how now, I sat in Juvenile Hall, fourteen going on fifteen with the judge's ruling, echoing over and over in my deaf ear, with the judge's voice ruling my fate in a single condemned sentenced finality that was thousands of miles away from reaching the dark depths of my defiant ears.

The Last Time

I sat there in Juvenile Hall for the last time, at age fifteen,
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WILLIAM GRAJEDA (CONT.)*continued from previous page*

not understanding I had lost, just lost the freedom of my young life, that I had just lost the freedom of my young adult life to come... that I had lost the true freedoms I never really knew I ever possessed! I lost a freedom that already seemed to have been lost in the despairing youth of my melancholized emptiness, in the cold dregs of ghetto streets, in the broken home of perilous distress, in the malnutritious of loveless nourishments in the missing touch from humanity."

There I sat for the last time in Juvenile Hall contemplating how tough I'll be in CYA thinking how I'm ready to show CYA just how bad I am. Only abstractly remembering the distant echo from the judge in my ear, "I hereby sentence you juvenile' to thirteen years in CYA." Juvenile life, he says "you have been condemned," which means I'll get out when I'm twenty-five, lest I find my way into the dark shadows of state prisons' rage some where along my journey though CYA.

But hey I'm only fourteen, fifteen years old I'm no for-

tune teller or psychic hot line. What do I know, right? I'm the tough kid who's been in and out of Juvenile Hall since the age of nine; I'm the tough kid who is ready to take on every CYA from Preston, Nellis, YTS, and Chad... I should have enough time, you think?

There I Sit

There I sit for the last time gazing out the back window trying to steal a peak of the night moon there, trying to catch a drift of wild air from a crack, thinking about my loved ones who never seemed to be there, or are lost in a similar cage of despair. There I sit in the midst of my collective shadows regretting one moment and forgetting the next. There I sit justifying, rationalizing, convinced the world is against me. There I sit in Juvenile Hall for the last night, then tomorrow I'm off to CYA" There I sit, my haggard soul alone, afflicted in despairs... There I sit watching the darkness of the night slowly engulf the brooding peaks of the moon. There I sit lonesome, dreary in a strange detachment watching the remnants of my Juvenile times slip away — slipping away into the dark cold, unfeeling wild secret night.

It's all a mental game and you gotta be strong-minded.

JROC One of our all time favorite contributors dropped the following piece back in 2001. We haven't heard from JROC in years. What follows is the intro from issue 6.41. In this piece, JROC spits straight forward game that will easily give you a glimpse of what life is like on a level four. As long as we have known JROC he has been a young man we could count on. Well over three years ago we met JROC in our weekly workshops in the max three unit in 150 aka Alameda County Juvenile Hall. He quickly developed into a natural leader in our workshops. His writings grew stronger and stronger each week, despite the pains of his case, which eventually lead him to his present state, High Desert State Prison in Susanville CA. We cherish our relationship and his commitment to teach.

Penitentiary Life

The ideology most people have of this pen is fictitious and far-fetched. One can only grasp the totality of it from first-hand experience. But some of the morbid tales are true and to the point. The gang-style rapes are just a scare tactic to put in sorry individuals' imaginations. Homosexuality does exist, as it does anywhere else, but it's a choice that convicts or inmates choose to indulge in. Don't just cast an assumption that only lifers indulge in it ('cause some lifers morals and values go against such activities), 'cause I've seen cats with dates as short as 2010 cell up wit' a punk.

Barbarism is a day-to-day thang, but don't think it happens to everybody and at the same time, ain't nobody exempt from it. Mostly sharks prey on the weak and wounded, but at times even rida's get rode on. Combative tactics are practiced and studied every day due to the fact that these modern day plantations are just a battle zone for slaves of different races. Survival of the fittest.

There is a very few people who function, exist, and stand alone. You are categorized and subjected to different things based on your affiliation with gangs or political cadres (movements) or racist sects. Even as non-affiliates, you hang with certain CARs (groups) such as the Bay Car (Oakland/Richmond/ San Francisco) or EPA Car just to give you an idea. As a collective you only mingle with your own race — in here segregation still exists and racism is a scar left on your mental.

I don't really agree with the racism 'cause in my mind, a White convict or Southerner is not my true enemy. We (all races) fail to understand that the struggle is not about race as much as about a class struggle — the downtrodden people in this country (not of this country), the outcasts of society voted out by the people in control (not the people). Judged not by our crime but our background, an error in judgement. The whole court system is a master of deception. They say "The People of The United States vs. John Doe," but it's not that way at all.

With this destructive thinkin' and backwards politics some of these convicts have, they will be forever doomed. It is hard to be enemies with people you are in such close contact with everyday. The true enemy are the ones opposing us and playin' basketball with football rules, going back and forth tellin' this race that the other race has it in for them, thus keepin' us at one another's throats. Their plan is as old as civilization: Divide and conquer, and it's still workin'. The blatant racism is practiced and put into effect inside

of their penitentiaries, which is a reflection of our future society if no one takes a stand at changing this.

As a whole, the penal system has nothing to offer a person who is trying to better themselves! They cut rehabilitation and return thus to introducing cruel and unusual punishment and modern-day slavery. No type of college programs, physical fitness, or job preparation classes — just a sixth grade education!

I can't speak for every pen, but this one (High Desert) is workin' on its own terms! If you are an African (any African descendant) or a Northerner, you have very little comin'. You are viewed as highly manipulative just because you are from the Bay Area, based on the fact that we pop some fluently and floss accurately. When somethin' goes down as far as race riots or attacks on COs, they say automatically that the shot call came out of The Bay. The Racism is in total persuasion of the program.

For instance, just last night there was so-called "high tension" between two races so they laid the day room down and found a knife. Now normally if two races collide, they lock down both races for a long period of time. They came off lockdown the next night. But the Africans collided with the Southerners and we been on lockdown since March and it is now September. I feel like there is a conspiracy against the African race! Maybe a few selective people got off on the true enemy (authority) due to disrespect that is shown and racism displayed to our people up here. This is a war-zone constantly with Africans winning the battles but losing the war.

During lockdown, out of 168 hours in a week, we only come out 30 minutes during the 168 hours to take showers — three days out of seven. You can't receive packages from your family, can't order your TV and radios or tapes and CDs, deprived of the canteen. And only served two semi-cold trays of food a day! The visitor is limited and your family has to see you unshackled and put in a small booth divided by thick Plexiglas. Can you imagine your child, mother, or nieces and nephews thoughts seeing you there goin' through this? Can you fathom the thought of your mother crying when she sees the scars left on your wrist from the cuffs being too tight? Can you learn to laugh to keep from crying? It's mental stress and depressing!

The pen ain't cool at all, so miss this if you can. But if you are one of the many juveniles that are victims of Proposition 21, it's too late to miss it! I can't run the prison politics in depth, but I can say get ready mentally. I say mental opposed to physical because all things is 90% mental and 10% physical. It's all a mental game and you gotta be strong-minded. It's good to be a rida, but it takes more than that at times! You ain't gotta walk on eggshells but you gotta try not to wreck, 'cause you not only thinkin' for yourself, but for your whole race, 'cause if you collide they collide wit' you.

So think before you make a move. Separate yourself from that juvenile mentality of tryin' to prove you hard and tough. I hope you don't have to get down, but if you do, strike with precision! Make it count or be a victim to your own attack! Things vary from yard to yard, but a three or four (level) yard ain't no joke, so dismiss the sugar-coated stories from your mind.

This is real. Stay strong and take heed. One luv.

The Dream

It was another normal night at CYA/NRCC Dorm 4. Like usual, when the night staff made their round at 10pm, I asked one of them to turn off our light. Our cell then was lit up by the night light, which never goes off.

Me and my roommate talked for awhile, about what, I have forgotten, but I do remember we both agreeing on this one wish; if we could just sleep and wake up to be let out on parole.

I do not know when sleep had crept up behind from the blindside and taken control of me. The next thing I know, I was walking in Downtown San Francisco towards Chinatown. I was wearing the YA outfit, which is a pair of cheap ass shoes, a pair of blue cut off jeans and a t-shirt, which is white with the letters NYRCC stamped on the shirt.

I thought while walking towards Chinatown, for what reason I don't know why, that my wish had come true. But I also thought, if this is a dream, I hope it will never end. I was so happy, that I didn't even pay attention where I was walking to. All I could think about was that I was free, free once again! Away from isolation, away from steel doors with the little ass screens.

I was also wandering what had happened to my roommate. I'm sure he must've got out too. I thought.

But in no time, I was walking through one of them alley ways in Chinatown. To my surprise, nothing changed. There were those steel gates in front of some place, and the sound of MJ coming out from behind those doors. Everything was just as I had remembered. About twenty feet in front of me, something not very unusual to my eyes stood a group of young men smoking cigarettes, leaning against the brick wall of the building or shall I say small house.

As I got closer, I recognized some of them, they were my enemies. The ones who had brought me down from my reputation in Chinatown. The ones who had got me to quit banging because I was scared to die, and also because of my dead homie, who they killed (RIP).

Walking pass them, they all stared at me. Just staring like I was a stranger in the wrong place, which I probably was. And as dreams always do, I was walking up Pig Yuen (Restaurant) in a blink of an eye. I guess I was walking towards my mom's place, where she works. As for Ping Yuen nothing changed, everything was just as I had remembered it.

"Hey, Mervyn! Mervyn!!" I heard someone yell. It was a girl's voice, a voice that sounds very familiar but I couldn't quite put a finger on it. I turned around to see who was calling me.

"Hey... Up here!" Went the voice again. I looked up, and there was my play sister Betty, looking out of one of the many windows in the building. I was dumbfounded. I stood there like a staute looking at her.

"Hey, stay there, I'll be down." She then shouted.

I instantly walked or should I say started moving towards the building's entrance which is right next to this office. I didn't know why I even started moving, probably by instinct. Before I even got near the entrance, Betty walked out. She looked the same, with her jet black hair and that dark skin which made her look more Filipino than Chinese.

"When did you get out?" She asked me once she got infront of me.

"I just got out...uh... today." I replied, hesitating a little bit. Because I really didn't know when I got out. I don't even remember doing the time I was ordered to serve.

"Lets go over there and sit down." She said, pointing to a bench. We went over and sat down, then we started talking. Not long into our conversation, some guys walked over and stood infront of us. I was confused for a minute 'cause I didn't know what was going on.

"Betty, I need to talk to you." one of the guys in the front said. I recognized him as "Phi." A guy that used to be my enemy, but we became friends at CYA/NRCC. Betty got up without even saying a word and walked with Phi about ten feet way from me.

PURE DRAGON This piece was originally aired in The Beat back in issue 5.19. It reads...Pure Dragon returns this week from the CYA/NRCC in Sacramento, sharing more of his loves, dreams, fears, and thoughts. We cherish Dragon's ability to utilize this precious access in educating us all through the power of the pencil, as he shares his visions with us at The Beat. Pure Dragon was once a prime time contributor in or weekly workshops in the max unit in SF/YGC. We are honored to continue this special relationship.

While they were talking, I was thinking didn't Phi get three years and was sent to do his time at CYA/DWN? It can't be three years already!? I thought or actually asked myself. I was still thinking, dwelling on my thoughts, when suddenly Phi's voice interrupted my thoughts.

"Hey Mervyn, when did you get out?" Phi asked.

"I...uh... just got out today." I stated, as I quickly thought to myself, what day is it today?

"I'm so glad to see you're out." He replied.

"Well yeah, me too. It's good to be out" I said looking at him. He (Phi) looked the same. He still had that chubby ass face with small eyes, plus he was still fat.

He suddenly sat down next to me and whispered something into my ear. At first I couldn't make it out, but then it came clear to me that he was asking me if I needed a strap, 'cause things are different in Chinatown now.

I never got the chance to answer him 'cause I woke up looking at my white ceiling and was attacked by the night light in my cell.

I truly don't kow what this dream meant. And for a moment there, when I woke up, I was feeling kinda disappointed 'cause that dream seemed so real and it was still fresh in my head.

Written 05/08/00

My Precise One

In the day I think of you,
at night I always dream of you.
you are the ghost of my dreams
always haunting me
and invading my private world.
A world where make believe comes true,
a world where my broken heart
could only be cured.
In this world we we're always together.
In this world we're always hugging and kissing,
smiling and laughing.
Of course, it is only a world of make believe,
but it doesn't matter to me,
'cause it is the only place where I could be with you,
where I could hold you tight in my arms
and feel the warmth of your body,
where I could look up and see that beautiful face
with that so enticing smile.
And where I could hear your laughter,
but when reality hits, it's always the same.
I have to face the truth with a broken heart,
and always regret what I have done to lose you,
my precise one.
My heart is full of pain and always full of hate.
Hating myself for being stupid,
for being so blind.
And for not knowing I was hurting you
deep down inside.
I was selfish for I only thought of myself.
Thought of all the pain you were causing
inside my heart,
but it's not all your fault,
because I wanted to live a life
that only brought isolation or death,
I should've listened, but I didn't,
now it's too late, and my heart is aching with pain.
A pain that wil never end, but only expand,
goodbye my precise one!

This poem is dedicated to Amy, my precise one.
You will always be in my heart.
Written on 05/08/00

...this life has gotten me nowhere but in group homes and locked up. I see that if we constantly make the same mistakes, we will see the same places. I'm ready to do me, not what the street wants me to be.

check out the rest of Baby Doll's POW on page 6

